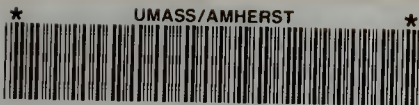


MASS.  
CD10.2:  
R327



312066 0270 7889 4









Mass. CD10.2:R327

massachusetts  
department  
of  
community  
affairs

# REVITALIZING SMALL TOWN CBD's

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

JUN 30 1988

University of Massachusetts  
Depository Copy

case study  
**millbury,** massachusetts

## local assistance series 7

office  
of  
local  
assistance





# Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Michael S. Dukakis • Governor



Executive Office of Communities and Development  
Department of Community Affairs

William G. Flynn • Secretary

Robert H. Bateman • Assistant Secretary

Division of Community Services

Ellis Goldman • Administrator

Office of Local Assistance

Richard M. Kobayashi • Director





REVITALIZING SMALL TOWN  
CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICTS

with Case Study for

TOWN OF MILLBURY, MASSACHUSETTS

Massachusetts Department of Community Affairs

Local Assistance Series

Publication No. 7

March, 1976



This report was jointly prepared by

The Planning Services Group, Inc.

and the

Massachusetts Department of Community Affairs  
Office of Local Assistance  
1 Ashburton Place, 16th Floor  
Boston, Massachusetts 02108

Prepared for

The Task Force for the Development of  
Millbury Center, Massachusetts  
The Honorable Richard J. Dwinell, Chairman

Project Staff:

Madhukar A. Rege	Principal Planner
Constantine Yankopoulos	Chief Planning Officer
Richard Khan	Graphic Artist
Johnny Phillips	Printer

March, 1976

The preparation of this report was financed in part through a Comprehensive Planning Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, under the provisions of Section 701 of the Housing Act of 1954, as amended.





# REVITALIZING SMALL TOWN CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICTS

## Table of Contents

	Page
Preface . . . . .	1
Introduction. . . . .	2
<u>Ch. I. THE ROLE, FORM AND FUTURE OF THE SMALL CBD</u>	
A. THE ROLE OF THE SMALL CBD . . . . .	I- 1
1. Small Groupings of Business in the Regional Business Hierarchy. . . . .	I- 1
a. Basis of Survey	
b. Trends in Number of Retail Establishments	
c. Trends in Per Capita Sales	
d. Examples of Various Roles	
e. Business Specialization Within a Region	
f. Summary	
2. The Town Center and the Small CBD . . . . .	I-15
a. The Potential Strengths of the Small CBD	
b. Capitalizing on the Strengths	
c. The Consequences of Decline	
d. An Example of Change: Sharon	
e. Options for Change	
B. DESIGN FACTORS IN THE SMALL CBD . . . . .	I-20
1. Physical Constraints and Common Solutions . . . . .	I-20
a. Typical Plan Forms and Associated Problems and Solutions	
b. Topographical Constraints	
c. The Need for Off-Street Parking	
d. The Effect of Area Requirements for Parking	
e. Pedestrian Circulation	
f. Land Use Conflicts	
2. Problems of Design and Appearance . . . . .	I-30
a. Identity	
b. Rhythm of Business Buildings	
c. Condition and Appearance	
d. Streetscape	
3. Problems of Land Assembly and Development Regulations . . . . .	I-35
a. Ownership Patterns	
b. Some Alternatives to Conventional Purchase	
c. Development Regulations	
4. Recapitulation: the Small CBD versus the Shopping Center . .	I-40
C. THE FUTURE OF THE SMALL CBD . . . . .	I-43
1. Forces for Change . . . . .	I-43
a. Population Change	
b. Changes in Consumer Habits	
c. Social Trends	
d. Summary	
2. The Changing CBD. . . . .	I-46
3. Planned Change: Two Approaches . . . . .	I-46

## Ch. II. PLANNING TO REVIVE THE SMALL CBD

A.	SELF-ANALYSIS . . . . .	II- 1
1.	Identification of the CBD's Role in the Market. . . . .	II- 1
2.	Description of the Center's Role Within the Community . . . .	II- 3
3.	Identification of the Center's Physical Problems. . . . .	II- 4
	a. Topography and Natural Conditions	
	b. Existing Land Use	
	c. Ownerships	
	d. Circulation and Traffic	
	e. Parking Inventory	
	f. Utilities	
	g. Building Conditions	
	h. Visual/Historic Inventory	
4.	Identification of Legal Constraints . . . . .	II- 8
	a. Zoning Bylaw	
	b. Other Legal Constraints	
5.	Evaluation: Strengths and Weaknesses . . . . .	II- 9
	a. The CBD	
	b. Civic Center	
	c. Specialized Residential Area	
B.	FORMULATION OF GOALS. . . . .	II-10
1.	Review of Applicable Goals. . . . .	II-10
	a. Town Goals	
	b. Local Growth Policy Committee	
	c. Regional Goals	
	d. CBD/Town Center Goals	
2.	Local Opinion Surveys . . . . .	II-12
	a. Internal Reviews	
	b. Public Meetings	
	c. General Survey	
	d. Sampling	
	e. Selective Survey	
3.	Summary of Goals. . . . .	II-13
C.	PRELIMINARY PLAN. . . . .	II-13
1.	Elements of the Concept Plan. . . . .	II-14
	a. Graphic Analysis of Problems and Opportunities	
	b. Circulation Scheme	
	c. Land Use	
	d. Concept Plan	
2.	Preliminary Assessment of Impacts . . . . .	II-15
	a. Dislocations	
	b. Costs	
	c. Social Impacts	
	d. Environmental Impacts	
3.	Public Review . . . . .	II-17
D.	ORGANIZATION AND FUNDING. . . . .	II-17
1.	Responsibilities. . . . .	II-17
	a. Responsibilities, Recombined	
	b. Duration of Effort	
2.	The Development Corporation . . . . .	II-19
	a. Organization	
	b. Possible Activities	

(Chapter II cont.)

D.	3.	The Special Community Development Agency. . . . .	II-20
	4.	Ad Hoc Coordination . . . . .	II-21
	5.	Possible Funding. . . . .	II-22
	a.	Private Funding	
	b.	Publicly Assisted Funding	
E.		IMPLEMENTATION. . . . .	II-25
	1.	Recapitulation of Preliminary Steps . . . . .	II-25
	a.	Concept Plan	
	b.	Organization and Working Funds	
	2.	Action Plan . . . . .	II-27
	a.	Development Plan	
	b.	Search for Funds	
	3.	Supportive Actions. . . . .	II-28
	a.	Guidance of Private Efforts	
	b.	Related Municipal Support	

Ch. III. POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STATE AND THE REGION

A.		POSSIBLE STATE ACTIONS. . . . .	III- 2
	1.	State Urban Renewal . . . . .	III- 2
	a.	Provision of Seed-Money for CBD Planning	
	b.	State-Guaranteed Loans	
	2.	Tax Legislation . . . . .	III- 3
	a.	Planned Unit Developments in CBD's	
	b.	Historic Districts	
	c.	Non-Profit Development Corporations in CBD's	
	d.	Private Restoration of Store Fronts	
	3.	Zoning Act. . . . .	III- 4
	a.	Extension of Site Review Powers	
	b.	Contributions in Lieu	
	c.	Transfer of Development Rights	
B.		POSSIBLE REGIONAL ACTIONS . . . . .	III- 5
	1.	Regional Responses. . . . .	III- 5
	a.	Technical Assistance	
	b.	Review of Proposals Affecting CBD's	
	2.	Regional Initiatives. . . . .	III- 6
	a.	Expansion of Review Coverage	
	b.	Coordination of Local Zoning for Highway Business	
	c.	Supplementary Supporting Policies	
C.		CONCLUSION. . . . .	III- 7

Ch. IV. CASE STUDY: MILLBURY CBD

A.		BACKGROUND. . . . .	IV- 1
	1.	Choice of Millbury. . . . .	IV- 1
	2.	Formation of a Task Force . . . . .	IV- 1
	3.	Consultant's Role . . . . .	IV- 2
	4.	Basic Data for Millbury . . . . .	IV- 2
B.		MILLBURY'S POTENTIAL MARKET . . . . .	IV- 4
	1.	Millbury's Market Area. . . . .	IV- 4
	2.	Types of Retail Millbury Might Attract. . . . .	IV- 5
	3.	Summary: Potential for Retail Growth in the Millbury CBD . .	IV- 7



(Chapter IV cont.)

C.	ASSESSMENT OF PROBLEMS AND POTENTIALS . . . . .	IV- 8
1.	Physical Problems . . . . .	IV- 8
a.	Sprawl of Residential Development	
b.	Highways and Highway-Related Commercial Development	
c.	Traffic Congestion and Parking	
d.	Pedestrian Circulation	
e.	Unattractive, Unaesthetic Environment	
f.	Lack of Sign Controls	
g.	Lack of Total Design	
2.	Design Potentials . . . . .	IV-11
3.	Design Objectives . . . . .	IV-13
a.	Accessibility	
b.	Compactness	
c.	Variety	
d.	Safety and Comfort	
e.	Aesthetic Appearance	
f.	Preservation of Historic and Cultural Heritage	
g.	Primacy as Trading, Cultural and Civic Center...	
4.	Developing The Plan . . . . .	IV-14
D.	THE CONCEPT PLAN: GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS . . . . .	IV-15
1.	Recommended Zoning. . . . .	IV-15
a.	Service Area	
b.	Residential Development in Millbury	
c.	The "Residential District"	
d.	Suburban I and Suburban II	
e.	Multi-Family Dwellings	
f.	Business Districts	
g.	Minimum Lot Area and Density Requirements	
h.	Recommendations	
i.	Business A District	
j.	Mixed Commercial/Residential	
2.	Physical Appearance . . . . .	IV-18
a.	Clean-Up, Repair and Painting	
b.	Rehabilitation of Structures of Historic...Value	
c.	Landscape Planting and Street Furniture	
d.	Sign Control	
e.	Sign Regulation By-Laws	
f.	Lighting	
g.	Removal of Overhead Utility Wires	
3.	Land Use and Physical Arrangement Within the CBD. . . . .	IV-26
a.	Zoning of Commercial Areas	
b.	Non-Commercial Uses in Commercial Districts	
c.	Minimum Lot Sizes and Yards	
d.	High Density Residential Uses in the CBD	
E.	SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS. . . . .	IV-28
1.	Land Use and Zoning . . . . .	IV-28
a.	Existing Land Use and Zoning	
b.	Recommendations	
2.	Traffic Circulation and Parking . . . . .	IV-30
a.	Solutions Applicable to the Problems of CBD Traffic	
b.	Parking Improvements	
c.	TOPICS Traffic Recommendations for Millbury Center	
d.	Other Provisions	



(Chapter IV cont.)

F.	THE DESIGN CONCEPT. . . . .	IV-34
1.	Central Focus: The Town Plaza. . . . .	IV-34
2.	Land Use Around the Plaza . . . . .	IV-36
3.	The Plaza and the River . . . . .	IV-36
4.	The Mini-Mall . . . . .	IV-36
5.	Consolidation of Parking Spaces . . . . .	IV-37
6.	Street Treatment. . . . .	IV-38
	a. Right-of-Way	
	b. Sidewalks	
	c. Vistas and Planting	
G.	THE IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM. . . . .	IV-39
H.	COST OF IMPLEMENTATION. . . . .	IV-41

## Tables

	Page
1. Massachusetts Towns with 50-100 Retail Establishments, 1963, 1972	I- 2
2. 46 Towns...Total Per Capita Sales...1963 and 1972	I- 3
3. 46 Small Business Areas...Sales/Capita (Details) 1972	I- 9
4. Worcester SMSA, Per Capita Retail Sales, 1972	I-13
5. Worcester SMSA, Distribution of Retail Sales by Category, 1972	I-14
6. Millbury's Estimated Market Area	IV- 5
7. "Daily Needs" Retail Sales per Capita, 1972...Millbury...	IV- 5
8. Other Retail Sales per Capita, 1972...Millbury...	IV- 6
9. Families with Median Incomes of \$15,000...1969...	IV- 7
10. Retail Sales per Capita... Selected Categories (Millbury and 46 Towns)	IV- 8
11. Millbury: Minimum Residential Lot Areas and Resulting Densities	IV-17
12. Recommended Dwelling Types and Dimensional Requirements	IV-19
13. Cost of Public Works in Phases	IV-43

## Figures

1. Evolution of Crossroads CBD	I-21
2. Examples of Well-Defined CBD's	I-23
3. Parking in Relationship to Stores	I-23
4. Acceptable Distances to Shopping	I-23
5. Criteria for Parking and Loading Areas	I-26
6. Some Schemes for...Circulation	I-26
7. Back Entries to Stores--Quincy	I-28
8. Second-Floor Walkway; Pedestrian Mall--Newburyport	I-28
9. Arcade; Apartments Over Stores--Sharon	I-28
10. Unifying Covered Walk--Magnolia	I-28
11. Brookline Bylaws--Sample Text and Sketches	I-32
12. Proposed Parking and Circulation--Sharon	I-34
13. Accumulated Changes--Arlington CBD	I-34
14. Business/Municipal Cooperation--Salem, 1826	I-37
15. Detail, Pedestrian Mall--Derby Square, Salem	I-37
16. Location Map of Millbury, Mass.	IV- 3
17. Zoning Map, Millbury Center	IV-16
18. Preservable Buildings, Millbury Center	IV-20
19. Examples of...Plantings and Street Furniture	IV-22
20. Examples of Signs	IV-24
21. Land Use Map, Millbury Center	IV-29
22. Design Concept, Millbury Center	IV-35
23. Development Plan, Millbury Center	fold-out

## P R E F A C E

This report is part of a special series of local assistance studies undertaken by the Community Planning and Management Section, Office of Local Assistance, of the Massachusetts Department of Community Affairs, financed in part through the Federal HUD 701 Planning and Management Assistance Program. This series of studies represents a departure from previous efforts of the Department in providing technical assistance to Massachusetts communities under 50,000 population. Earlier efforts of the DCA concentrated limited staff and consultant resources to produce long-term (1 to 2 year) master plan studies for only a few of the Commonwealth's cities and towns each year. In contrast to this former approach, DCA's delivery of technical assistance now concentrates short-term efforts on addressing urgent local issues of state-wide significance, through the use of the case study or model approach.

A key element in this style of technical service delivery is that DCA staff and consultants attempt to achieve solutions which might help many communities by gaining concrete and practical insights into a problem in the context of a given community. In this way, other communities facing similar problems can benefit from the work performed in the model community.

This study concentrates on the problems of revitalizing small town CBD's and the model community was the Town of Millbury. Other studies conducted as part of this new service and the communities in which they were carried out are as follows: Establishing a Department of Community Development, Peabody; Evaluating Development Impact, Chelmsford; Developing a Land Use Management Process, Mashpee; Organizing for Economic Development, Wareham; Monitoring Change in Residential Neighborhoods, Melrose; Protecting Agricultural Land, Westfield; and Evaluating Reuse Options for Large Institutional Land Holdings, Lenox. These projects were selected by DCA from among 70 applications by over 50 municipalities under 50,000 population from across the state.

The Planning and Management Section of the Office of Local Assistance wishes to acknowledge the contribution of the many local officials and citizens who were involved in these studies. Without their interest, cooperation, and critique, these studies would not be as meaningful to you.

We urge you to contact the Office of Local Assistance for further information if your community is considering action in the area covered in this report. Let us know too, if you find these studies useful or have any suggestions in improving DCA's new program of technical assistance.



## I N T R O D U C T I O N

The Central Business District of Massachusetts communities is the result of gradual development, growth, change, neglect, and decline over a long period of time. Many factors have influenced their location, type and pattern of development. Some were located on transportation terminals or break-points. Some evolved around local/state government centers or to serve a population growth resulting from the location of industries based on local natural resources. Many grew from an original nucleus of a general store, an inn or lodging house, a stable, etc., to service an expanding population that demanded more goods and services. They provided feed stores, lumber and building supplies, hardware and farm equipment, barber shops and restaurants to meet the needs of a basically farming population as well as those of a relatively smaller non-farm population. The requirements of the community, such as churches and schools, town offices and libraries, post offices, telephone and telegraph services and recreation facilities, were provided in the same general area as the need for them arose. The Central Business District (CBD) was usually located in an area of best accessibility to the whole community, and it was efficient enough to provide all or most requirements of a community at such a location.

With the coming of the automobile, however, travel time to larger trade centers began to decrease. It was no longer imperative to live in fairly close proximity to the local town center or places of employment. Populations of communities lost their original, relatively compact, pattern of settlement and became widely dispersed and scattered. As a result of these factors, many small business centers declined and some completely disappeared in spite of the absolute increase in population and income that many communities experienced.

A few large towns and cities benefited by virtue of location, industry, transportation, resources or government institutions, and continued to grow and expand their commercial areas. It was in these cities that the major department stores first developed. The automobile brought the people to them at the expense of smaller towns. Yet, even the larger city CBD's developed their own problems. Some grew more rapidly than expected and had not planned for adequate space for expansion. Others reached a peak of activity in the early part of the century and then, because of changes in transportation, changes in technology of production and/or distribution, or loss of major industry such as textile or leather goods, faced a declining trade area base. None were prepared to cope with the ever-increasing demands of the automobile in terms of road pavement widths and parking. Aging building stock, neglect, absentee ownership, street congestion and lack of parking in these centers led to loss of customer appeal and convenience. Successful businesses in these centers, being unable to expand or remodel, began to look around for a solution to their problems.

Thus, the suburban shopping center arrived on the scene. The shopping center offered opportunities for expansion, modern merchandising, adequate parking, a pleasant, controlled environment and a maximum of customer convenience. In recent years, the continuing decline in rural population, the reduction of travel time to nearby metropolitan centers, and the development



of larger, more attractive shopping centers have taken away the business that local population growth and increased consumer buying power would otherwise be expected to bring to local Central Business Districts. Many of these business districts still provide the farmer with agriculturally oriented goods and services and function as daily service centers for the population living in an area of roughly one mile radius. They are no longer the centers of activity they once were for their communities, nor do they show much vitality or attraction for growth.

There are two main reasons why shopping centers were allowed to move in. First, the communities had no proper safeguards against such developments by way of land use or zoning regulations; and second, the communities wanted the revenues that these shopping center developments generated. Such developments also provided some jobs for the residents of the communities.

Many of the costs associated with such developments are hidden from the community at the time when they are first established and only surface gradually as new utility structures and services, security services, transportation and transportation-related services (such as parking and traffic safety devices), public services (such as education, health, and other people-related services), have to be provided to deal with these commercial developments and the residential developments that soon follow them. Extensions of utility lines create further new residential development, and in this way, the cost of municipal services keeps going up. The initial gain in additional revenues due to such development is swallowed up very soon and overtaken by the direct and indirect costs generated by them.

The Central Business District, which suffers a loss of trade as a result of competition from the highway-related development, begins to lose its businesses. Vacant buildings and sites become an eyesore due to structural deterioration, lack of maintenance and general neglect. In this way, considerable investment in the Central Business District in terms of utility services and buildings is lost to the community.

In this atmosphere of apathy and neglect, a new hope for vitality and growth for some of the Central Business Districts is slowly emerging. The new hope comes out of the dissatisfaction felt by many communities with the existing residential sprawl and the great difficulty and cost of providing utilities and services to the resident population. Also, as the long familiar local landmarks and institutions have disappeared, or are fast disappearing, a new awareness and desire to maintain their local heritage and community identity are unfolding. Destruction of the natural environment and topographic and scenic character of many of these communities has created a need for protection of the natural resources and of the unique character of these communities. Increased cost of fuel and energy production has given rise to a concern for new methods and practices of energy conservation. Social stratification and atomization of suburban sprawl have created a need for new patterns of living and working aimed at commonly-shared values and social cohesion.

The Central Business District has functioned traditionally as a focal point for community activities ranging from parades and band concerts to finance and government, as well as the center for trade and service. A

substantial investment in terms of buildings and infrastructure has been made by the communities in their central areas. It is of critical importance that these functions of the CBD be preserved or, in some cases, brought back or revitalized in order to foster community identity and pride.

This publication is designed to help small towns which are concerned about the future of their town centers to preserve and revitalize them. Business is a vital part of these centers. The first three chapters are a general discussion of the economic functions of the CBD, the local attack on its problems, and what can be done to support them legislatively. The last chapter deals with the case study of Millbury, Massachusetts. Our intent is to stimulate other such efforts in the knowledge that small town CBD's have a promising future, and that tools for their revitalization exist. Concerted effort by local authorities, local businessmen and interested citizens can accomplish this goal.



## Chapter I

# THE ROLE, FORM AND FUTURE OF THE SMALL CBD

### A. THE ROLE OF THE SMALL CBD

Well over a quarter of the State's population still lived in small places in 1970. Specifically, 994,547 or 17.5 percent of the population of Massachusetts lived in 75 small places of 10,000-20,000 population and another 618,336 or 11 percent lived in 130 places numbering 2,500-10,000 persons. Once almost each of these 200 small towns had an active, compact business center at its heart--even if only one cracker-barrel store and a blacksmith. Today, many of these Central Business Districts (CBD's) are losing out to highway shopping areas, but there are others which have capitalized on their unique character and are doing well. To the remaining small-town CBD's must be added the neighborhood CBD's which proliferate in the 69 larger towns and cities. Thus one is talking on the order of several hundreds of such small CBD's.

What is to become of small CBD's? Why do we care? Examination of the role of the small CBD leads to the answer, which is that the healthy small CBD combines several economic and social roles in a way not possible for the highway shopping center or the large urban downtown. There is, first, its still significant commercial role in the regional hierarchy of retail and service outlets. Secondly, looking inward, are its multi-faceted functions as a small town or neighborhood center: it is usually the location of the town or neighborhood's financial, cultural and governmental mainstays. This is the place where daily contacts are made and community events are staged. The identity of the resident and of the community are strengthened by these interpersonal contacts. Furthermore, the small CBD is a source--and sometimes the only source--of local jobs. Finally, it is usually in itself a significant element of the tax base and a factor in residential valuations as well, since people will pay more for homes in a town with a center befitting a respectable character than in one whose center bespeaks neglect.

#### 1. SMALL GROUPINGS OF BUSINESS IN THE REGIONAL BUSINESS HIERARCHY

##### a. Basis of Survey

"Small" is, of course, a relative term. For the purposes of statistical comparisons, we have arbitrarily grouped all those towns which had between 50 and 100 retail establishments listed in the 1972 U.S. Census of Retail Business. This number corresponds approximately to the number of establishments found in large highway shopping malls (although their volume of sales is very much higher) and likewise to that of many neighborhood CBD's in larger places, such as Cleary Square in Boston's Hyde Park section (62 stores). The greatest concentration of stores in these small groupings of business is usually, but not always, found in the local town center or CBD. Millbury, the prototype town used in this study, fell in the middle of the selected range with

Table 1.

## MASSACHUSETTS TOWNS WITH 50-100 RETAIL ESTABLISHMENTS IN 1963 and/or 1972

Source: U.S. Census of Retail Trade, 1963, 1972

TOWNS WITH 50-100 STORES IN 1963

Worcester County: <sup>1</sup>	Number of Stores			All Other (cont.):	Number of Stores		
	'63	'72	Change		'63	'72	Change
Auburn	89	171	+ 82	Rockport	80	122	+ 42
Dudley	64	75	+ 11	Swampscott	81	103	+ 22
Grafton	72	91	+ 19	Montague	65	74	+ 9
Holden	61	74	+ 13	Orange	58	80	+ 22
MILLBURY	64	73	+ 9	East Longmeadow	56	104	+ 48
Northborough	59	66	+ 7	Longmeadow	60	58	- 2
Oxford	73	71	- 2	Amherst	81	159	+ 78
Spencer	93	87	- 6	South Hadley	73	103	+ 30
Uxbridge	76	78	+ 2	Ayer	79	85	+ 6
Westborough	75	114	+ 29	Bedford	66	95	+ 29
Winchendon	86	86	0	Billerica	93	171	+ 78
- - - - -	-	-	-	Burlington	63	183	+120
All Other Counties:				Dracut	76	107	+ 31
				Hudson	91	137	+ 46
Bourne	93	177	+ 84	Maynard	99	107	+ 8
Lee	68	81	+ 13	Reading	96	135	+ 39
Williamstown	63	86	+ 23	Tewksbury	65	86	+ 21
Easton	73	92	+ 19	Wilmington	67	120	+ 53
Mansfield	69	81	+ 12	Cohasset	66	80	+ 14
Swansea	70	78	+ 8	Foxborough	64	94	+ 30
Ipswich	98	114	+ 16	Milton	88	112	+ 24
North Andover	85	111	+ 26	Sharon	55	88	+ 33

1. The total gain in small Worcester County towns, excluding Auburn and Northbridge, was 157 retail establishments in 9 years, or about 8.6 new stores (net) for each 1,000 population added in a 10-year period.

ADDITIONAL TOWNS WITH 50-100 STORES IN 1972

Worcester County:	Number of Stores			All Other (cont.):	Number of Stores		
	'63	'72	Change		'63	'72	Change
Blackstone	*	52	*	North Reading	*	96	*
Leicester	42	84	+ 42	Wayland	42	82	+ 40
Northbridge	112	66	- 56	Westford	32	72	+ 40
West Boylston	46	53	+ 7	Bellingham	*	99	*
- - - - -	-	-	-	Holbrook	48	82	+ 34
All Other Counties:				Medway	39	62	+ 23
				Kingston	*	99	*
Raynham	*	87	*	Pembroke	*	72	*
Lynnfield	24	64	+ 40	West Bridgewater	*	79	*
Manchester	2	53	+ 51	Westwood	56	74	+ 18
Wilbraham	*	67	*	Abington	77	97	+ 20
Ashland	33	57	+ 24	Bridgewater	75	100	+ 25
Holliston	*	61	*	Hull	93	110	+ 17
Littleton	*	55	*	Scituate	93	120	+ 27

\* no data given in 1963



Table 2.

46 TOWNS WITH 50-100 RETAIL ESTABLISHMENTS IN 1972  
TOTAL PER CAPITA SALES, RETAIL and SELECTED SERVICES, 1963 and 1972

(Sources: 1963, 1972 U.S. Censuses, Retail Trade; Selected Service Industries)

COUNTY and PLACE	1960	1963 SALES/CAP.				1970	1972 SALES/CAP.				CHANGE
	POP.	Re- tail	Ser- vices	Tot. R&S	RATIO*	POP.	Re- tail	Ser- vices	Tot. R&S	RATIO	IN RATIO*
<b>Berkshire Co.</b>											
Lee	5,271	1,491	179	1,670	100	6,426	2,271	300	2,571	88	- 12
Williamstown	7,322	1,146	333	1,479	88	8,454	1,817	343	2,160	74	- 14
<b>Bristol Co.</b>											
Easton	9,078	916	88	1,004	60	12,157	1,209	170	1,379	47	- 13
Mansfield	7,773	1,237	86	1,323	79	9,939	2,178	201	2,379	82	+ 3
Raynham	4,150	n.a.	n.a.	--	--	6,705	6,018	855	6,873	236	--
Swansea	9,916	581	39	620	37	12,640	1,133	94	1,227	42	+ 5
<b>Essex Co.</b>											
Lynnfield	8,398	302	n.a.	--	--	10,826	1,635	302	1,937	66	--
Manchester	3,932	n.a.	n.a.	--	--	5,151	1,459	398	1,857	64	--
<b>Franklin Co.</b>											
Montague	7,836	582	69	651	39	8,451	1,372	284	1,656	57	+ 18
Orange	6,154	913	92	1,005	60	6,104	1,359	155	1,514	52	- 8
<b>Hampden Co.</b>											
Longmeadow	10,565	1,009	42	1,051	63	15,630	1,065	221	1,286	44	- 19
Wilbraham	7,387	n.a.	n.a.	--	--	11,984	938	211	1,149	41	--
<b>Middlesex Co.</b>											
Ashland	7,779	557	61	618	37	8,882	1,693	155	1,848	63	+ 36
Ayer	14,927	737	76	813	49	8,283	2,053	283	2,336	80	+ 31 (1)
Bedford	10,969	1,191	600	1,791	107	13,513	2,140	4128	6,268	215	+108 (2)
Holliston	6,222	n.a.	n.a.	--	--	12,069	692	167	859	29	--
Littleton	5,109	n.a.	n.a.	--	--	6,380	1,781	154	1,935	66	--
No. Reading	11,264	n.a.	n.a.	--	--	11,264	2,438	256	2,694	92	--
Tewksbury	15,902	447	44	491	29	22,755	1,849	350	2,199	75	+ 46
Wayland	10,444	674	66	740	44	13,461	1,047	293	1,340	46	+ 2
Westford	6,261	337	115	452	27	10,368	604	134	738	25	- 2
<b>Norfolk Co.</b>											
Bellingham	6,774	n.a.	0	--	--	13,967	2,635	155	2,790	96	--
Cohasset	5,840	1,883	101	1,984	119	6,954	3,649	506	4,155	143	+ 24
Foxborough	10,136	1,177	291	1,468	88	14,218	2,230	1070	3,300	113	+ 25
Holbrook	10,104	696	90	786	47	11,775	1,636	217	1,853	64	+ 17
Medway	5,168	1,195	89	1,284	77	7,938	1,650	196	1,846	63	- 14
Sharon	10,070	573	82	655	39	12,367	1,271	298	1,569	54	+ 15
Westwood	10,354	828	135	963	58	12,750	795	674	1,469	50	- 8
<b>Plymouth Co.</b>											
Abington	10,607	955	96	1,051	63	12,343	1,406	194	1,600	55	- 8
Bridgewater	10,276	790	36	826	49	11,829	1,543	101	1,644	56	+ 17
Kingston	5,999	n.a.	n.a.	--	--	5,999	3,186	365	3,551	122	--
Pembroke	4,919	n.a.	n.a.	--	--	11,193	1,393	206	1,604	55	--
W. Bridgewater	5,061	n.a.	n.a.	--	--	7,152	2,895	147	3,042	104	--

\* Ratio of locality's sales/capita to state's sales/capita, if state=100

Notes: 1. Note Ayer's population drop (Fort Devens); sales/cap were lower when more lived on Base.

2. Considering Bedford's retail only, ratio rose merely from 83 to 90 (+7).  
Bedford has a concentration of engineering services (R & D).

(cont.)



Table 2. (cont.)

COUNTY and PLACE	1960	1963 SALES/CAP.				1970	1972 SALES/CAP.				CHANGE
	POP.	Re- tail	Ser- vices	Tot. R&S	RATIO*	POP.	Re- tail	Ser- vices	Tot. R&S	RATIO	IN RATIO*
<b>Worcester Co.</b>											
Blackstone	5,130	n.a.	n.a.	--	--	6,566	1,632	153	1,785	61	--
Dudley	6,510	945	65	1,010	65	8,087	1,920	138	2,058	71	+ 6
Grafton	10,624	956	63	1,019	63	11,659	1,330	85	1,415	49	- 14
Holden	10,117	1,163	70	1,233	74	12,564	1,767	325	2,092	72	- 2
Leicester	8,177	493	103	596	36	9,140	813	152	965	33	- 3
<u>MILLBURY</u>	9,623	693	58	751	45	11,987	1,258	125	1,383	47	+ 2
Northborough	6,687	1,093	89	1,182	71	9,218	1,327	189	1,516	52	- 19
Northbridge	10,800	1,223	57	1,280	35	11,795	1,567	143	1,710	27	- 8
Oxford	9,282	794	49	843	50	10,345	871	123	872	30	- 20
Spencer	7,838	1,401	58	1,459	87	8,779	1,821	152	1,973	68	- 19
Uxbridge	7,789	788	67	855	51	8,253	2,206	270	2,476	85	+ 34
W. Boylston	5,526	859	154	1,816	49	6,369	1,098	508	1,606	55	+ 6
Winchendon	9,599	1,486	120	1,606	96	12,594	2,133	120	2,253	77	- 19
<hr/>											
Worcester SMSA	323,306	1,413	176	1,589	95	344,320	2,486	402	2,888	99	+ 4
Boston SMSA	2,589,301	1,534	303	1,837	110		2,559	862	3,421	117	+ 7
						2,753,700					
<hr/>											
STATE	5,148,578	1,443	231	1,674	100		2,338	577	2,915	100	0
						5,689,170					

Note 3. In terms of dollars, state average sales/cap. grew by 74% in 9 y

34 Towns with data for both 1963 and 1972: 17 lost, 17 gained in relation to state sales/cap.

(excluding Bedford): Average gain of 16 gainers was 18 points vis-a-vis state average,  
 " loss " 17 losers " 12 " " " "  
 Average for 33 gainers and losers was 2.6 " " "

Overall, then, small business areas (not necessarily CBD's) gained somewhat more business than expectable from population growth alone. However, in Worcester County small business areas lost 4.7 points; Millbury did relatively well, gaining 2.

73 establishments in 1972, of which approximately 45 or 50 were located in the CBD. This does not include banks, offices and other non-retail services. All the groupings shown are for whole political units (towns); CBD's and neighborhood centers in larger cities could not be isolated from these statistics.

#### b. Trends in Number of Retail Establishments

Table 1 lists the 66 towns with 50-100 stores in 1963 and/or 1972. Although this table tells nothing about the volume of sales, it does illustrate one important point: far more businesses (1,583 net) started up in this period than went under (132 net). For the towns listed in Worcester County, for example, the gain averaged 8.6 stores for every 100 of population added from 1960 to 1970.

#### c. Trends in Per Capita Sales

Table 2 gives the retail sales and the receipts for selected services of 46 towns with 50-100 retail establishments in 1972 and compares them with the 1963 data for the 34 towns in which both years are given. In order to discount inflation, population growth and changes in consumer habits, per capita sales in each town are also expressed as a ratio of the state's average per capita sales.

It will be seen that the business prosperity of the 34 towns described in both benchmark years varied relative to the state--17 gained, 17 lost. Excluding Bedford whose huge gain we infer to have been concentrated in R & D engineering services (not separately listed in the Census), the average gain of the 16 gainers was 18 points vis-a-vis the state average and the average loss of the 17 losers was 12 points. The combined average for the 33 gainers and losers was a gain of 2.6 points. Overall then, small groupings of business and services (not necessarily CBD's) gained somewhat more in sales than called for by population growth alone. Worcester County's 12 small business groupings lagged behind others in the state, losing 4.7 points on the average. Millbury, however, was one of the four exceptions; it gained 2 points, not far behind the average for all 33 towns.

#### d. Examples of Various Roles

Familiarity with individual places allows one to spot the variety of roles small-town CBD's and highway business strips and shopping malls fill and helps to explain the variations in their histories. Table 3 analyzes the 46 places by categories of retail stores and selected services. The Census omitted many figures in order to avoid disclosure of individual enterprises, but even so it is possible to distinguish variations in the commercial makeup of the 46 towns. We have selected these examples as illustrative of differing characteristics.

#### Comments on Selected Small Groupings of Business

"tops" in this context means that per capita sales are the highest of this group of 46 towns. They are also all above the state per capita average.

"high" indicates per capita sales above the state average.



"significant" is applied to sales above average for those towns among the 46 for which data was disclosed, excluding the highest and lowest examples to avoid distortion.

#### Lee

Special features: Turnpike exit; near Tanglewood. Total sales: significant.

Tops in Gas

High in Eat<sup>1</sup>, Building<sup>2</sup>, Furniture

Significant in Apparel and very nearly so in Misc. Retail

Lee's highway business strip catches off-Turnpike traffic with Gas and Eat. Its proximity to the resort/retirement areas around Tanglewood probably helps sales in Building and Furniture. There is a two-block healthy looking CBD in which Apparel and Misc. Retail (boutiques) are found.

#### Williamstown

Special features: Ivy League college. Total sales: significant.

High in Gas, Apparel, Eat, Drug, Hotel/motel, Amusements

Significant in Misc. Retail

There is a good deal of strip business along the two traversing state routes, catering both to the college population and to neighboring North Adams. The two-block CBD itself, however, is strongly college-oriented. It has high-quality book stores, skiing and sports equipment, specialty foods, gifts and two good restaurants.

#### Manchester

Special features: within North Shore seasonal area. Total sales: significant.

High in Food, Gas, Eat, Drug

Significant in Misc. Retail

Here all sales are concentrated in the CBD. Its success is partially due to the residents' high incomes, partially to its having captured the North Shore market for items such as sporting goods and arts and crafts. The seasonal nature of the market leaves many stores vacant in the winter, however.

#### Raynham

Special features: regional highway business. Total sales: tops.

Tops in General Merchandise (among those disclosed), Autos

High in Gas, Eat, Drugs (probably also Amusements--dogtrack undisclosed)

Significant in Misc. Retail

There is no real CBD. Automobile dealers brought in 69% of total retail and service sales and general merchandise brought another 14%. The pattern here is of a solid succession of large highway plazas interspersed with other highway business moving along Rt. 44 from the Taunton line to Rt. 24 (a major route to Providence and the Cape) and on past. This highway business is supplanting Taunton's CBD and is itself affected by the eastward trend. Raynham itself is a suburban town. The dogtrack has little effect on other sales.

#### Winchendon

Special features: rural market center. Total sales: significant.

---

1. Eat = Eating & Drinking establishments

2. Building - Building materials, hardware, etc.

High in Building, Apparel, Furniture  
Significant in Misc. Retail

Most of the activity here takes place in the bustling CBD, except that furniture sales are probably accounted for by factory outlets. Food sales are also close to average for this group. Although Winchendon has only 6,600 people and rather low median incomes, it is central to half a dozen smaller towns on both sides of the state line for which it appears to act as the most convenient market place.

#### Longmeadow

Special features: high income inner suburb. Total sales: below average for this group (76%).

High in Drugs, Amusements (probably also Gen. Merchandise--undisclosed)

There is no shopping in the town center; most takes place in a mall which is awkwardly divided by major highways. The mall includes two department stores in different price ranges, a supermarket, miscellaneous retail, cafeterias, etc. Evidently it is not capturing all of the local market, let alone a regional one. Springfield and other shopping centers compete.

#### Millbury

Special features: none. Total sales: below average for group (82%).

Not significant in any category (except the very minor one of Misc. Repairs)

Millbury is an example of a small CBD which provides a little of almost everything for a purely local market; though sales are modest, most categories are represented. Millbury itself is an average income town, with a balance of industrial and residential uses and a range of housing types. It has none of the particular locational advantages which characterize some of the other places described, such as a close relationship to major highways, the presence of an important institution or a captive seasonal market.

It is obvious from the foregoing that small groupings of business can play a great variety of roles. Raynham was included by way of contrast. Raynham, which has no CBD, reported an average sales volume of \$4,638,000 per store as compared to stores in Manchester, all located in the CBD, which average \$142,000. In Raynham, only 31% of retail establishments were unincorporated (small, not part of a chain), whereas in Manchester this proportion was 47%. The respective figures for Millbury, which had more CBD than highway business and also had twice Manchester's population, were \$172,000 and 64%.

Above one sees examples of CBD's which fill the following roles:

- convenience shopping for local residents (Millbury);
- sub-regional market town (Winchendon);
- supplies for the seasonal market (Manchester, Lee);
- items for the college age group and interests (Williamstown);
- services for travelers (Lee).

One can think of other examples not caught in this particular statistical net. Different combinations of retail and services would be prominent in a town with a large Army base, a major medical center, a resort area with negligible off-season population, a town specializing in certain local products (e.g., cheese and sausage in Wisconsin's New Glarus) or in a certain class of goods (antiques in one Maine coastal town), a retirement



community, etcetera and so on. In broad outline, however, these combinations can be grouped into three basic functions:

(1) Standard goods and services for the captive market

Whatever else it carries, the usual CBD will probably have some food stores (though major markets are generally on the highway) eating and drinking places, a drug store, miscellaneous retail and perhaps a modest amount of apparel and furnishings. It is unlikely to have outlets for building materials or general merchandise other than a hardware shop or variety store. Auto dealers are seldom found in the CBD proper. The oldest gas station in town may be in the CBD, but newer ones are generally outside.

The CBD's captive market can be deliberately increased by literally building in more residents or more day-time population in offices and institutional employment within walking distance. The provision of a convenient public transit line will also bring in customers.

(2) Items appealing to a special population group

Here the pulling power extends to the sub-region or region, yet the turnover of items is too low to warrant location within a high-rental regional shopping mall. The "special" population group may be defined in many ways: in terms of income (higher-priced lines of clothes, food, gifts, household items); in terms of education (books, records, quality design); in terms of recreational interests (sporting goods, tourist items); in terms of a specific age grouping (clothes and toys for children, kitchen equipment for young couples, a pharmacy for the elderly) and so on.

Here the way to increase the market is to provide for a cluster of small stores at reasonable rents in an attractive setting. There is strength in numbers, since people travel more willingly to visit several stores at once. Advertising for the group as a whole should stress the goods and services likely to appeal to that special population group. The CBD would also benefit from the inclusion of types of food service and commercial or free recreation appropriate to that group. Housing around the CBD can augment this "special" group.

(3) Concentration in a specialized field of goods or services

In this case, the market may extend beyond the region, depending on how well known the specialty is. One town may become known as the place to go for locally made delicatessen, wooden bowls or pottery; another for antiques; a third for a wide selection of sport clothes or equipment; a fourth for its medical office center.

The key here is the opportunity to comparison-shop from one outlet to the next in comfort, or to visit a series of related offices. This type of specialized small CBD is less common than the other two described and is apt to get its start through the historical accident of a successful pioneer in the specialty. Once under way, specialization can be bolstered by special annual events, such as antique auctions, craft exhibits or whatever is appropriate. Residential density has no particular influence on this category.



Table 3.

46 SMALL BUSINESS AREAS (Towns with 50-100 Retail Establishments)  
 RETAIL AND SELECTED SERVICES SALES/CAPITA IN 1972  
 (Sources: 1972 U.S. Census; Retail Trade; Selected Service Industries. 1970 Pop.)

COUNTY and PLACE	RETAIL ESTABLISHMENT SALES/CAPITA									
	(see notes at end of table for full titles of categories)									
	Gen.									
	Bldg	Merch	Food	Auto	Gas	Wear	Furn	Eat	Drug	Misc
BERKSHIRE CO.										
Lee	253	--	--	--	461	126	207	298	--	193
Williamstown	--	--	381	294	175	165	--	331	101	276
BRISTOL CO.										
Easton	--	--	310	269	160	--	--	127	--	182
Mansfield	--	111	365	679	188	--	138	51	--	201
Raynham	--	991	--	2198	230	--	10	416	84	190
Swansea	--	--	--	357	151	--	--	192	--	114
ESSEX CO.										
Lynnfield	--	0	--	--	232	22	--	781	49	167
Manchester	--	0	526	56	154	--	--	254	76	282
FRANKLIN CO.										
Montague	--	--	380	138	125	--	16	130	--	--
Orange	--	--	302	145	139	--	46	118	--	319
HAMPDEN CO.										
Longmeadow	--	--	397	--	111	37	2	95	113	137
Wilbraham	--	0	65	334	129	0	40	91	--	192
MIDDLESEX CO.										
Ashland	70	--	544	--	210	0	--	280	--	122
Ayer	--	53	407	563	163	61	177	169	--	--
Bedford	61	--	542	--	191	--	57	117	84	264
Holliston	85	--	163	--	103	--	18	--	53	175
Littleton	--	--	647	399	179	--	--	93	--	255
No. Reading	115	602	827	47	115	63	34	320	73	242
Tewksbury	13	--	552	--	159	--	--	175	55	105
Wayland	--	18	332	--	170	18	--	124	--	233
Westford	20	--	103	--	150	0	26	79	--	128
NORFOLK CO.										
Bellingham	--	--	640	194	161	--	72	169	28	112
Cohasset	--	--	1294	1231	153	102	58	388	--	226
Foxborough	258	28	375	--	202	--	35	313	45	--
Holbrook	59	--	--	33	124	31	--	86	125	--
Medway	121	--	--	--	131	42	14	107	118	166
Sharon	--	--	567	60	43	26	58	96	59	108
Westwood	--	--	218	6	165	--	45	47	47	158
PLYMOUTH CO.										
Abington	65	41	492	265	106	--	--	155	53	206
Bridgewater	--	--	285	421	157	--	21	235	--	231
Kingston	312	--	324	594	209	151	241	388	--	239
Pembroke	171	--	--	172	249	--	99	90	0	179
W. Bridgewater	156	--	--	751	316	25	--	110	128	213

(cont.)

Table 3. (cont.)

COUNTY and PLACE	RETAIL ESTABLISHMENT SALES/CAPITA									
	Bldg	Gen. Merch	Food	Auto	Gas	Wear	Furn	Eat	Drug	Misc
<b>WORCESTER CO.</b>										
Blackstone	1	--	--	70	127	--	--	65	--	325
Dudley	--	--	--	836	131	13	86	63	53	117
Grafton	19	--	216	170	84	15	74	131	--	179
Holden	--	--	437	624	111	59	--	96	71	271
Leicester	--	--	177	6	62	0	--	83	--	264
MILLBURY	--	--	298	--	76	--	15	99	--	142
Northborough	129	--	278	--	155	0	92	182	--	387
Northbridge	97	157	687	121	88	54	58	63	72	169
Oxford	--	0	286	146	68	0	39	71	--	170
Spencer	212	--	723	179	88	--	107	113	87	--
Uxbridge	--	--	--	282	131	--	32	315	--	354
W. Boylston	--	--	--	--	70	40	--	117	112	184
Winchendon	155	43	401	--	128	229	247	120	--	276
<b>STATE, TOTAL</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>511</b>	<b>371</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>343</b>

Notes: "--" means data withheld to avoid disclosure

Bldg: Building materials, hardware, garden supply, mobile home dealers  
 Gen. Merch: General merchandise and group stores  
 Food: Food stores  
 Auto: Automotive dealers  
 Gas: Gasoline service stations  
 Wear: Apparel and accessory stores  
 Furn: Furniture, home furnishings and equipment stores  
 Eat: Eating and drinking places  
 Drug: Drug stores and proprietary stores  
 Misc: Miscellaneous retail stores

SELECTED SERVICES SALES/CAP					TOTAL SALES/CAPITA	COUNTY and PLACE
(see notes at end for full titles)						
	Auto	Misc				
Hotel	Fix	Fix	Recr.	Law	Retail and Service	
						BERKSHIRE CO.
--	--	--	--	--	\$ 2,571	Lee
145	19	--	61	21	2,160	Williamstown
						BRISTOL CO.
--	19	35	29	7	1,379	Easton
0	22	14	1	--	2,379	Mansfield
--	51	--	--	--	6,873	Raynham
0	--	--	29	0	1,227	Swansea
						ESSEX CO.
4	0	--	76	23	1,937	Lynnfield
--	16	--	106	31	1,857	Manchester
						FRANKLIN CO.
--	--	--	--	--	1,656	Montague
--	--	--	--	--	1,514	Orange
						HAMPDEN CO.
0	--	8	86	--	1,286	Longmeadow
--	--	3	39	--	1,149	Wilbraham



Table 3. (cont.)

SELECTED SERVICES SALES/CAP					TOTAL SALES/CAPITA Retail and Service	COUNTY and PLACE
Hotel	Auto Fix	Misc Fix	Recr.	Law		
MIDDLESEX CO.						
0	29	4	5	--	\$ 1,848	Ashland
--	25	--	1	50	2,336	Ayer
--	40	4	22	19	6,268	Bedford
0	20	9	10	3	859	Holliston
--	--	--	--	-	1,935	Littleton
--	6	43	138	6	2,694	No. Reading
--	18	23	26	--	2,199	Tewksbury
0	22	3	37	10	1,340	Wayland
0	19	--	34	1	738	Westford
MORFOLK CO.						
0	88	18	12	--	2,790	Bellingham
0	48	15	199	35	4,155	Cohasset
26	64	64	--	22	3,300	Foxborough
0	55	7	18	8	1,853	Holbrook
--	21	36	12	19	1,846	Medway
--	29	4	65	11	1,569	Sharon
--	--	7	3	4	1,469	Westwood
PLYMOUTH CO.						
--	67	18	14	--	1,600	Abington
--	31	6	14	--	1,644	Bridgewater
171	--	26	42	19	3,551	Kingston
--	--	13	72	7	1,604	Pembroke
53	57	31	86	60	3,042	W. Bridgewater
WORCESTER CO.						
0	51	--	0	--	1,785	Blackstone
0	33	--	--	--	2,058	Dudley
0	30	7	1	--	1,415	Grafton
--	--	--	--	8	2,092	Holden
0	54	--	48	--	965	Leicester
--	32	31	20	--	1,383	MILLBURY
--	15	7	39	40	1,516	Northborough
0	27	15	12	18	1,710	Northbridge
--	32	7	22	9	872	Oxford
--	44	40	12	--	1,973	Spencer
--	41	9	--	--	2,476	Uxbridge
65	52	53	--	0	1,606	W. Boylston
--	--	5	--	--	2,253	Winchendon
42	62	23	58	60	\$ 2,915	STATE, TOTAL

Notes: "--" means data withheld to avoid disclosure

Hotel: Hotels, motels, trailering parks, camps

Auto Fix: Automotive repair, services, garages

Misc. Fix: Miscellaneous repair services

Recr.: Amusement and recreation services, incl. movies

Law: Legal services

Note on Millbury: In comparison to 44 towns in this table (excluding highest and lowest), Millbury has only 75% of their average retail sales per capita. However, the distribution by kind of retail is fairly normal.

#### e. Business Specialization Within a Region

Tables 4 and 5 disclose the roles played by various types of shopping area within a single region, the Worcester Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA). Worcester City pulls in customers primarily for apparel; 3 out of 4 SMSA purchases are made here. The Auburn Mall clearly draws on its neighbors in at least 7 out of the 10 retail categories. Westborough on Route 9 is strong in highway business, especially auto sales and gas. Shrewsbury is a center for furniture buyers. Webster's old CBD has general merchandise and its newer highway business areas provide groceries for the smaller surrounding towns. All of these places have higher than SMSA-average sales per capita.

Some places have low overall sales, but specialize in one category. Spencer and Grafton, for instance, are sub-centers for building materials, Holden sells cars and Uxbridge captures more than its share of dollars for dining.

Millbury is one of 5 places in the SMSA without a specialty. All five are below the SMSA average in sales per capita, but Millbury has distinctly the highest ranking among them. It is well balanced between the "daily needs" categories (food, gas, eating places; drugstores not disclosed) and other retail, with 38-42% of its sales in "daily needs" as compared to 39% for the SMSA. Another category commonly found in CBD's, miscellaneous retail, accounts for 11% of Millbury's retail sales as compared to 13% in the region--another indication of a fairly well balanced CBD. This is not to say that Millbury could not support more retail of all kinds, but the variety of offerings present does help to explain why its sales have held up despite the absence of an ace drawing card.

The degree of concentration becomes more vivid in Table 5. For instance, 61% of the apparel sold outside Worcester went through Auburn or Shrewsbury. Over 40% of all automobiles sold outside the city were sold in just two places, Westborough and Holden. Two places, Auburn and Shrewsbury, were hosts to 25% of the dining public outside the city. Auburn alone accounted for 19% of miscellaneous retail sales through non-Worcester outlets.

If one may dare to generalize from these limited examples, it is to say that while shopping malls and other businesses along major highways attract the most dollars away from the city, the range of small-scale retail and services a sound small CBD can provide has continued to support the CBD's place in the overall economic hierarchy.

#### f. Summary

(1) Business in small business groupings is far from dead. Many more towns gained than lost stores between 1963 and 1972, although one cannot tell from this data whether the new stores were within CBD's or not.

(2) The relative prosperity of small business groupings as compared to state per capita sales was not so clear-cut; half lost, half gained. Once again, one cannot tell where the changes occurred--in the CBD's or the outskirts. However, the fact that gains did occur leaves room for optimism



Table 4.

## WORCESTER SMSA, PER CAPITA RETAIL SALES, 1972 (U.S. Census of Retail Trade)

Place (1970 population)	Total \$/cap	Daily Needs <sup>1</sup>	All Other <sup>2</sup>	Above SMSA average in these categories (in- sofar as disclosed):
SMSA (344,320)	2,486	976	1,510	SMSA averages (100%)
Worcester City (176,572)	2,604	980	1,624	Apparel(142%), Eat(110%), Misc. Retail(103%)
Auburn (15,347)	4,876	1,110	3,766	Bldg.(338%), Food(101%), Gas(131%), Apparel(245%), Eat(127%), Drugs(142%), Misc.Retail(200%). Note: General Merchandise not disclosed.
Grafton (11,659)	1,330	435	895 <sup>3</sup>	Building(186%)
Holden (12,564)	1,767	716	1,041	Autos(142%), Drugs(111%)
Leicester (9,140)	813	322	491 <sup>3</sup>	---
MILLBURY (11,987)	1,258	473	785 <sup>3</sup>	---
Northborough (9,218)	1,327	615	712 <sup>3</sup>	Bldg.(109%), Gas(108%), Misc.Retail(122%)
Northbridge (11,795)	1,567	910	657	Food(123%), Drugs(112%)
N. Brookfield (3,967)	1,110	113	997 <sup>4</sup>	--- (daily needs dis- torted by absence of figure for food)
Oxford (10,345)	871	425	451 <sup>3</sup>	---
Shrewsbury (19,196)	3,487	673	2,814 <sup>3</sup>	Gas(102%), Furniture(121%)
Spencer (8,799)	1,821	1,012	809	Bldg.(180%), Food(130%)
Uxbridge (8,253)	2,206	447	1,759 <sup>4</sup>	Eat(151%), Misc.Retail (111%) (daily needs dis- torted--no food figure)
Webster (14,917)	2,424	1,234	1,190	Gen.Merch.(110%), Food (146%), Eat(103%)
Westborough (12,594)	3,260	1,274	1,988	Food(123%), Autos(304%), Gas(199%), Eat(116%), Drugs(153%)
W. Boylston (6,369)	1,098	298	800 <sup>3</sup>	---

9 other towns (1,618) ...data not available...

1. Food, Gas, Eat &amp; Drink, Drugs

2. Bldg. Materials, Gen. Merchandise, Autos, Apparel, Furniture, Misc. Retail

3. Includes undisclosed Drugs (average for SMSA = 64/cap)

4. Includes undisclosed Food and Drugs (combined SMSA average = 622/cap)

Table 5.

WORCESTER SMSA, DISTRIBUTION OF RETAIL SALES (\$000) BY CATEGORY, 1972  
(Sources: 1972 U.S. Census of Retail Trade; 1970 U.S. Population Census)

Retail Category	Tot. SMSA (% of all sales)	Worc. City (% of sales/pop. in category) <sup>1</sup>	Other Disclosed	Rest	Places with more than 5% of SMSA sales in category
Building materi- als, hardware	40,650 ( 5)	18,015 <sup>1</sup> (44/51)	12,006 <sup>1</sup> (30/26)	(24/23) <sup>1</sup>	Auburn 15%; Spencer 5%
General Merchan- dise, variety	132,853 (15)	58,003 (44/51)	8,261 ( 6/11)	(50/38)	Most not disclosed. Webster 5%
Food stores	192,248 (22)	98,065 (51/51)	69,022 (36/33)	(13/ 6)	Webster 6%
Auto dealers	150,710 (18)	92,434 (61/51)	40,739 (27/35)	(12/14)	Westborough 11%; Holden 5%
Gas stations	49,744 ( 6)	22,834 (46/51)	20,989 (42/ 4)	(12/ 0) <sup>2</sup>	Westborough 7%; Auburn 6%; Shrewsbury 6%
Apparel, Accessory	50,245 ( 6)	36,742 (73/51)	11,443 (23/36)	( 4/13)	Auburn 11%; Shrewsbury 5%
Furniture, Furnishings	42,985 ( 5)	24,269 (56/51)	9,933 (23/39)	(21/10)	Shrewsbury 7%
Eating and Drinking Places	72,050 ( 8)	40,621 (56/51)	26,578 (37/49)	( 7/ 0) <sup>2</sup>	Auburn 6%; Shrewsbury 5%
Drug Stores	22,024 ( 2)	11,343 (52/51)	6,162 (28/24)	(20/25)	Auburn 6%
Miscellaneous Retail	109,612 (13)	57,578 (53/51)	39,027 (36/40)	(11/ 9)	Auburn 11%
TOTALS	855,907 (100)	459,895 (54/51)	244,160 (29/varies)	(17/varies)	

1. First figure in parenthesis is % SMSA sales in the retail category; second figure is % SMSA population in Worcester City, or in places whose sales were disclosed, or in places where not disclosed.

2. 9 places with total population of 1,618



that a positive approach to the preservation and revitalization of small CBD's can pay off.

(3) Small CBD's fill a variety of local, regional and supra-regional functions. Exploration of the particular area's assets will indicate which mix is most promising. This in turn will have some bearing on plans for the CBD and for residential development around it.

(4) Within a specific region (the Worcester SMSA in this case), one can distinguish the particular strengths of each type of shopping area--the central city (Worcester), the regional mall (Auburn), major highway business (Westborough), the secondary center (Webster) and the small CBD (Millbury). There is a distinct economic role for each. That of the small CBD is to offer a handy and balanced sampling of basics plus a selection of items not duplicated in the mass marts.

The preceding section has concentrated on the commercial functions of the small CBD. But the small CBD is more than a business block or two--it is usually also the center of the town or neighborhood's community life. The next section will describe the many functions of a vital town center which cannot be duplicated in any other type of business grouping.

## 2. THE TOWN CENTER AND THE SMALL CBD

### a. The Potential Strengths of the Small CBD

A small grouping of business which is also a part of a town center--a small CBD--has potential advantages all its own. The more of them are present, the more potent the CBD becomes commercially as well. They are described under the triple headings below:

#### (1) Business Center:

- quick access to frequently needed items not warranting a major trip, such as everyday foods, drugs, lunch, etc.
- selected goods and services which are not supplied by the typical mass market, for instance a special line of clothing, a superior gift shop, a fresh fish store, etc.
- personal relationships with customers, clients and patients and an intimate knowledge of their preferences, needs and credit standing; conversely, the customer's knowledge of where to find a trustworthy product or professional;
- accessibility to non-drivers--to those who simply like to walk and to the young, the elderly, the poor coming on foot or by bicycle or bus;
- unhurried, low-pressure atmosphere which turns errands into an excuse for a semi-social outing rather than into a harried hunt;
- relative safety of a familiar, small-scale, uncrowded area where mothers can keep track of children and the old are not jostled;

- entertainment value of any special features the place may have, such as bandstand concerts, open air skating, an outdoor cafe, sidewalk fair; and, not least,
- uniqueness of character, the interest and surprises offered by a center which has evolved over the years as contrasted to the rigid package design of even the best of malls.

(2) Community Center:

- locally oriented services, such as Post Office, banks, library;
- community activities, whether political, ceremonial or institutional and informal daily contacts;
- civic symbol: a sense of place, of character, of history;
- a human resource for daytime volunteer town services, such as volunteer firemen in small places, or service clubs;
- compact neighborhood for higher-density living quarters surrounding the CBD.

(3) Economic Role:

- net tax revenue surplus, once all needed municipal improvements are in place, since CBD's require few operating expenditures beyond fire and police protection and possibly traffic/parking controls;
- source of local jobs, not only for full-time workers but also for nearby housewives working part-time and youngsters on their first job.

b. Capitalizing on the Strengths

Many of these strengths can be reinforced by appropriate design measures. For instance:

Quick access calls for clear directions to the area as a whole, then easily located, handily placed, fast turn-over parking and segregation of all-day employee parking to lots elsewhere. Through circulation may have to be expedited or bypassed where it interferes with access to stores and parking.

Selected goods and services will sell more successfully if they can attract customers from further away. These will want parking by the hour rather than by the minute once there, but the chief problem is to get them to come in the first place. Uniqueness coupled with charm and perhaps some entertainment value will draw exploring shoppers. Clarity of lay-out and legible, uncluttered signs will help them to find their way into the shops which appeal to them and will suggest the quality of the offerings.

Personal relationships and trust between customers and shopkeepers seem to develop most easily in quarters which are small in scale and



distinct from one another. This does not necessarily imply separate buildings or wildly competing facades; there can be variety within a harmonious overall treatment.

Accessibility for non-drivers can be reinforced in several ways. Walking should be easy, safe and well-lit, both towards and between the shops. There should be racks for bicycles and a convenient shelter at the bus stop. The number of non-drivers, who form the core of the captive market, can be deliberately increased by encouraging the construction or conversion of small apartments in and around the CBD.

An unhurried atmosphere is fostered by the provision of places to linger and talk, such as park benches, soda fountains, sheltered doorways or arcades. There is less need to hurry home if one can find a rest room, or a tot-lot for restless youngsters.

Relative safety again implies clarity of lay-out and good lighting, also the absence of hiding places for muggers, or of empty stores or lots interrupting the business frontage. The presence of other pedestrians after dark, such as nearby apartment dwellers, is reassuring.

Uniqueness grows out of the preservation and enhancement of existing characteristic buildings and street trees, where these still exist, or also out of some deliberately unifying design devices applied to facades and street accessories.

Locally oriented services should not be allowed to flee the CBD if a place can still be found for the post office or municipal building or bank which is looking for a new home.

Community activities need a gathering place--what better than the traditional common or plaza. Also there should be a place to post official notices, announcements of community drives and general information about the town, particularly in one which has places of interest to tourists. The same bulletin board or kiosk can be used to exchange information about the center's human resources.

A compact neighborhood around the CBD not only offers an alternative lifestyle which supplements the typical one-family, low-density development of small communities but also increases the CBD's captive market, that is to say walk-in customers within about 1/3 mile of the center.

Civic symbols consist not only of the monuments and greens, on which attention can be focused by careful design, but also of the complex of vintage buildings and streetscape whose good maintenance tells of the community's pride in its past and present.

Net tax revenue surplus is maximized over the long run if business frontage is kept in desirable condition due to the installation and maintenance of municipal services such as parking, lighting, landscaping and utilities. Expenses for protection of persons and property can be minimized by attention to safety of circulation, fire-resistant construction and ease of visual supervision.

In short, the convenience of having goods and services near at hand is by no means the only thing that keeps a small CBD alive, as the majority can quite easily drive to the nearest highway shopping center and will contrive to do so when efficient shopping is the main criterion. What counts as well is the combination of personal attention, social interaction and sense of community that no impersonal shopping center can provide.

#### c. The Consequences of Decline

We have catalogued the possible strengths of the small CBD. What happens when a CBD declines? Aside from the direct loss in tax revenues due to weakened values, the effects of a blighted CBD will in time spiral into the following:

- vacancies, neglected appearance, lessened public efforts at upkeep;
- reduced safety of persons and property, thus reluctance to visit the CBD;
- displacement of formerly thriving stores by marginal uses to whom low rents are more important than a high volume of shoppers (second-hand stores, loan companies, used car lots, for example);
- a perfectly real, though intangible, loss in civic pride which will over the long run affect the local real estate market and thus ultimately valuations outside the CBD as well.

In other words, whether or not the decline of a CBD matters to the store owners themselves, it does matter to the town.

#### d. An Example of Change: Sharon

Change can occur quite rapidly and its effects on tax revenues can be quantified. Such a study was made for Sharon's CBD in 1966 at a time when 17% of its business floor space was vacant or burned out.<sup>1</sup> A comparable loss of 20% in CBD valuations would have amounted to \$3,000 a year at the 1966 tax rate. Conversely, if initiatives could be taken resulting in a modest rise of 20% in valuations--a not unreasonable hope in view of the 40% population growth expected by 1980--it was estimated that the avoidance of loss plus the gain in new valuations would result in about \$8,000 more yearly revenue (at the 1966 rate) than would occur under a do-nothing policy.

It is interesting to note what has actually happened. The town did not make any of the physical improvements or organizational efforts recommended in the study, but it did later pass a zoning change which allowed the market forces which had been shown to exist to operate more freely. This change was to permit the construction of two stories of small apartment units over a ground floor devoted to business. Within two years, one developer, who liked the balanced investment offered, erected four such buildings and a fifth is under way. These will add a net total of 57 dwelling units and

---

1. "The Square and the Triangle," prepared for the Sharon Planning Board by The Planning Services Group, Inc., 1967



27 commercial spaces to the prior totals of 34 and 39 respectively. The majority of the one- and two-bedroom apartments have been occupied by former Sharon homeowners or their newly married children. While it would be wrong to overlook the fact that some of the older buildings in the area are still run down and have second-story vacancies, all ground floor vacancies in the older buildings have been filled with small new stores, restaurants or banks, and doctors or lawyers have converted several houses for their practices. The rise in assessments since 1971, the year of revaluation and before the zoning change, has been on the order of 30%. At this point the Town has called a halt and voted to rezone to lower densities, not wishing to lose the formerly residential flavor of the area entirely. If there is any moral to this tale, it is that it is not enough to merely allow the market free play. Even though careful zoning regulation of the new buildings prevented any measurable abuses, it seems some form of esthetic control is also needed if the Town is to accept change willingly.

#### e. Options for Change

All this is not to say that every town center must choose between growth and decline. The third option is transformation.

It may be that the market for a local shopping center at the heart of town is simply too limited, or has been captured by another business location. In such cases, the aim should be to keep only those CBD enterprises which can count on continued local support and to encourage instead a build-up of the office, residential and institutional values of the center. It is important in this case, however, to manage commercial contraction in such a way that it does not blight opportunities for private investments in the area for apartments or offices. Attention must be paid to traffic, parking and the area's physical condition too. Conversion to the desired non-commercial uses requires the presence of appropriate zoning, sites and utilities. Perhaps a local body or institution can lead the way by regenerating a suitable building as a model for the desired shift in use.

Whether the aim is to keep the CBD alive as a business center or to encourage its transformation, "benign neglect" is not the answer. Care for the center's economic and civic future involves the capacity to make the most of its physical assets as well as an understanding of the social and economic roles we have already described. The next section thus deals with physical design.

## B. DESIGN FACTORS IN THE SMALL CBD

Given their local and regional significance, then why are so many small CBD's with reasonable market prospects nonetheless in trouble? Realization of the CBD's potential depends not only on the distinction of their economic and social roles from those of their competitors but also on the way physical constraints are dealt with. Furthermore, the very lack of physical cohesiveness often discourages any common effort to improve the CBD. The various sections below each deal predominantly with one aspect of design--plan, appearance, legal matrix--but in reality these will interlock.

### 1. PHYSICAL CONSTRAINTS AND COMMON SOLUTIONS

For each physical constraint there are typical solutions; both are given in the descriptions which follow.

#### a. Typical Plan Forms and Associated Problems and Solutions

##### (1) Cross Formation

Historically, many town centers and CBD's have arisen at the central crossroads, hence the frequency of cross-, T- or star-shaped CBD's. Millbury is an example of the cross. At the inception of most of these CBD's, traffic was slow and more people walked to the stores than rode a horse or trolley, but by now traffic has become an enemy rather than a source of business and parking crowds the curb. Shoppers have to be strongly motivated before they will cross and recross to the other sides. In consequence, one or two of the corners, the ones with the major attractions, such as a food store or bank, will tend to become dominant while the other corners weaken. (see p. I-21)

To reduce the congestion which splinters the cross, parking should be pulled away from the street and access to parking must be controlled in a way which will not interrupt traffic. To overcome the fragmentation into four corners, one can either emphasize commercial development of one corner at the expense of the others, or attempt to re-unite facing blocks of stores by removing most or all of the intervening traffic to a bypass road.

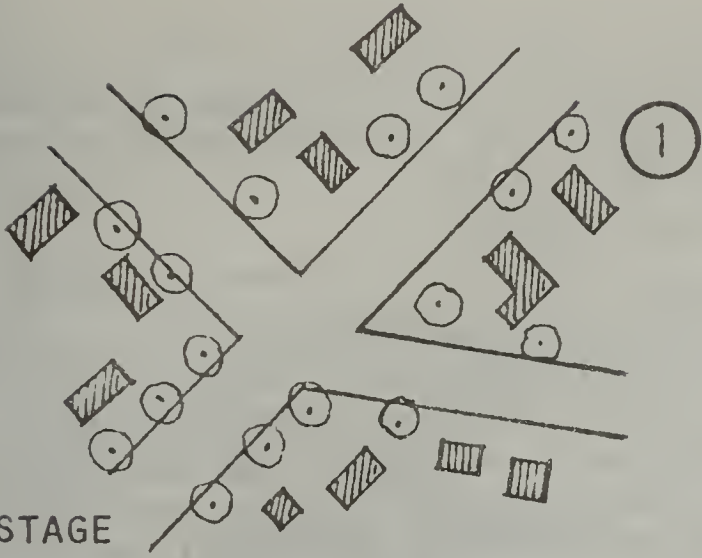
##### (2) T-Formation

The T-formation is also quite common. Lexington and Concord have this. Usually the bar of the T, being the major road, will have more extensive development. Here a new problem arises: the over-extended district. People will not willingly walk much more than 300 feet from parking for short errands, although they may do so in crossing the lot of a large shopping center where they expect to spend several hours. The frequent pull-outs for reparking closer to the next destination in the fragmented or over-extended CBD are an annoyance both to the shopper and the through-driver.

In Lexington and Concord, there has been an effort to consolidate parking lots behind the rows of shops and to take advantage of interior frontage on these lots. Both towns are also fortunate in that natural stops have



## EVOLUTION OF THE CROSSROADS CBD



FIRST STAGE

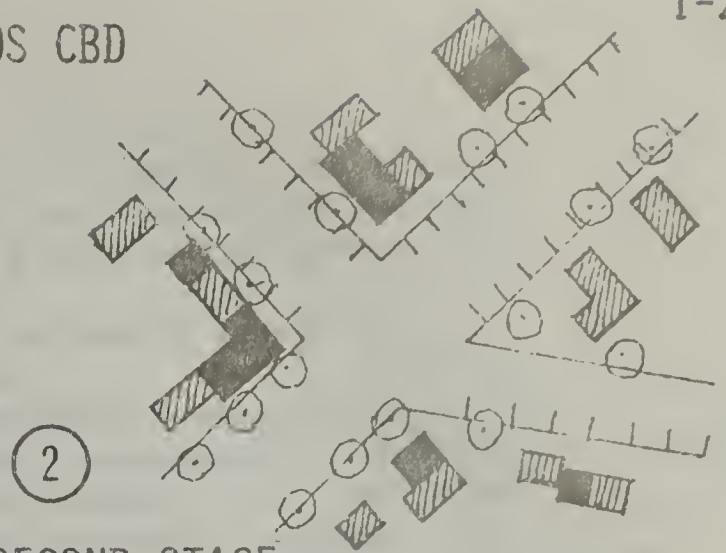
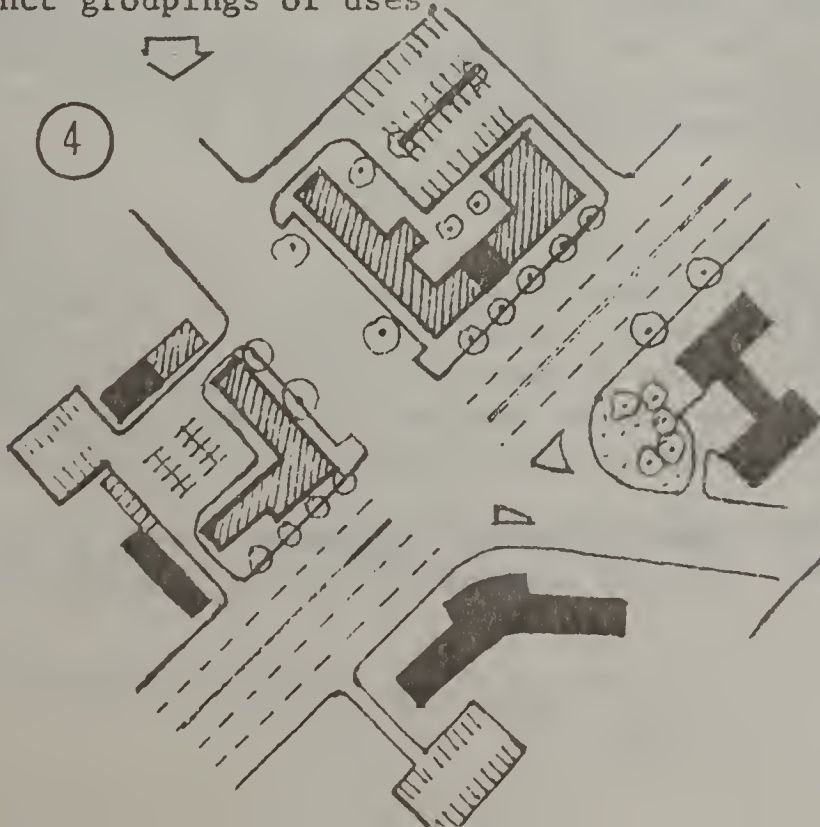
Individual stores or converted houses at a crossroad. Slow traffic, unobstructed streets.

THIRD STAGE

One or two corners weaken, yielding to gas stations or second-rate stores. Traffic control becomes necessary. Some curb parking is removed to ease traffic. Small parking lots are eked out here and there.

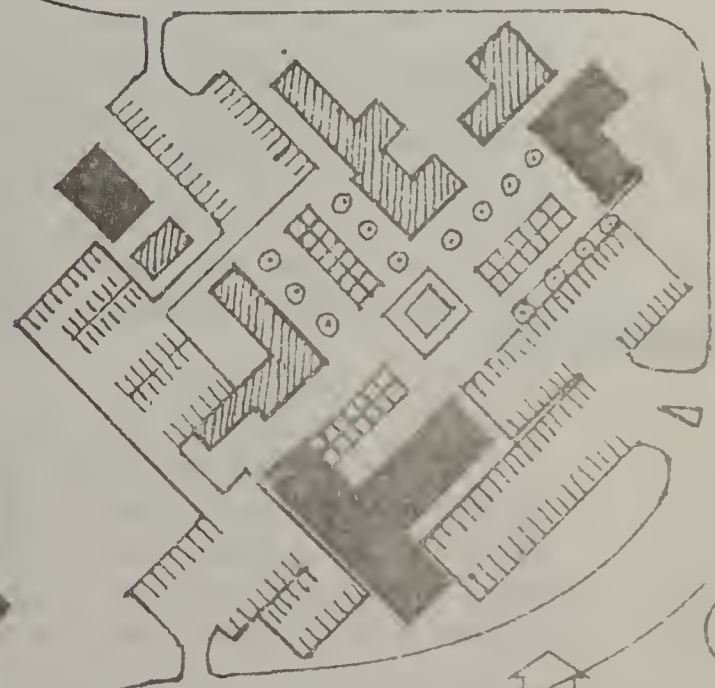
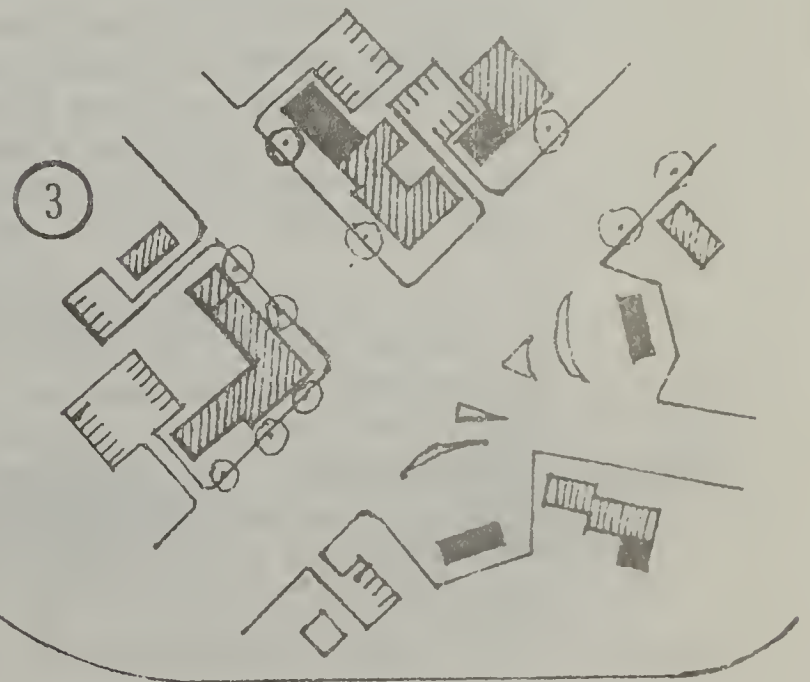
FOURTH STAGE: (MODEST SOLUTION)

One or two corners become dominant and the parking behind them is consolidated with rear access to stores. Through roads are devoted primarily to through traffic and the sidewalks widened and landscaped. Weaker corners are re-developed for non-commercial uses, such as housing, offices or institutions. Rezoning reinforces the distinct groupings of uses.



SECOND STAGE

Stores begin to merge fronts. Street is widened but reoccupied by curb parking. Zoning treats all four corners alike.



FOURTH STAGE: (RADICAL SOLUTION)

Bypassing of through traffic allows transformation of the former crossroads pavement into a pedestrian mall which links business on all four corners together.

limited over-extension. Lexington has the Lexington Green at one end and the Town Offices at the other and in Concord, various cemeteries and institutions define the area's bounds (see p. I-23).

### (3) Linear Formation

Northbridge is basically linear, with one end stopped by a town green and various monumental institutions and industries. Uxbridge is linear too. This "Main Street" form was apt to occur in the first place because of some topographical constriction which dictated the form of the community's major street. This is particularly apparent in Uxbridge, where one side is hemmed in by the railroad and the other by a steep slope; the CBD itself sits within a dip in the road, where the station is. Arlington too was squeezed into linear form by tracks and topography, but here the CBD is so much bigger that distance itself adds to its fragmentation.

One difficulty with this linear form is apt to be the lack of usable depth behind Main Street, due either to physical barriers or to densely developed residence, thus limiting possibilities for off-street parking to the rear. Another problem already mentioned is over-extension, such as was often encouraged by old-fashioned strip zoning, and with this comes the related problem of lack of definition--just where is the center?

If the problem of over-extension cannot be solved by shortening and deepening the strips zoned for business, two other solutions can be tried. The attempt can be made to concentrate future business development into certain blocks which do possess the depth and flexibility for such development. Alternatively, one can treat this frankly as a highway business strip rather than as a pedestrian-oriented CBD and require enough separation between buildings and driveways so that parking can be provided alongside the buildings and traffic conflicts at the entry and exit points can be spaced more widely and thus diminished.

The problem of defining the linear CBD in visual terms can be handled by a combination of methods. One can use, or place, a major building or open space to mark the end of the business-zoned strip. One can set the business area apart by distinctive treatment of the street, sidewalks, trees and lighting. A style of building unlike that of the residential approaches to the CBD can be encouraged, that is buildings whose frontages adjoin, which are higher or lower than the typical houses and which use fire-resistive facings. Buildings can be tied together visually by repetitive decorative themes or an extended canopy.

### (4) O-Formation

The central plaza or market place surrounded by shops is more common in Europe and Latin America than here. Scale is vital: the open center needs to be accessible to and easily crossed by pedestrians if all frontages are to benefit equally. And such plazas typically do have throngs of pedestrians converging from the entering streets and surrounding apartments.

The American form is the classic New England common, such as Belcher-town, Barre and Grafton have. This is a handsome setting for churches and



FIG.2

## EXAMPLES OF WELL DEFINED CBD'S (GENERALIZED LAND USE)

- Retail & services  
 ▨ Public, Semi-public  
 ▩ Parks

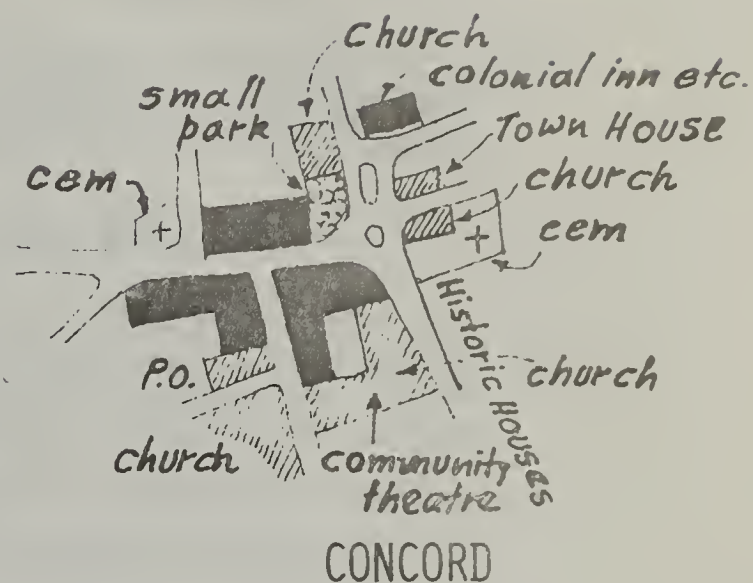
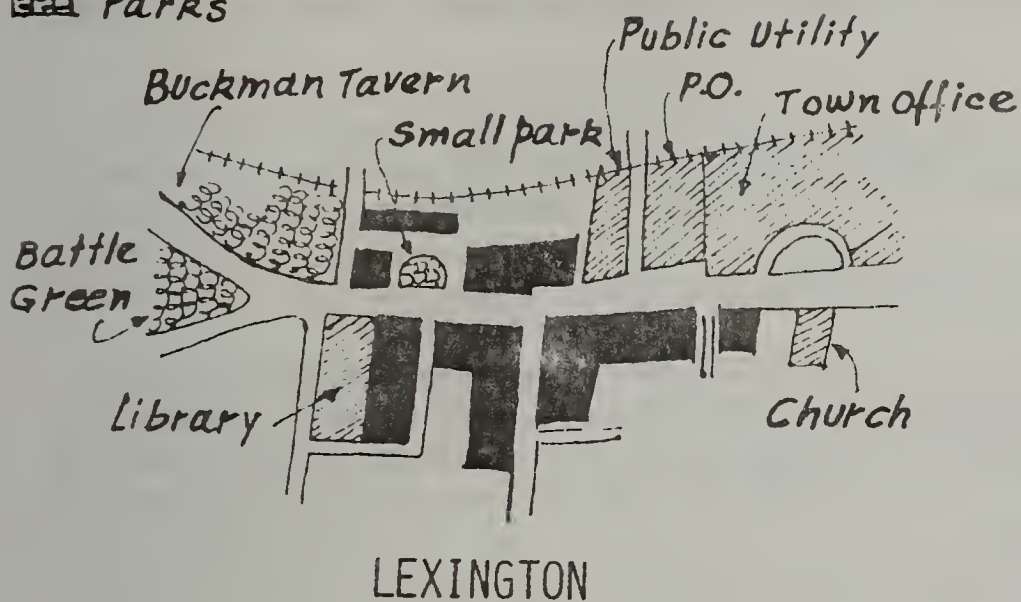
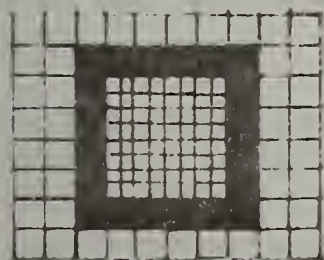


FIG.3

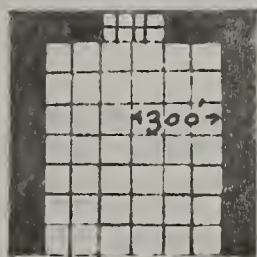
## PARKING IN RELATION TO STORES

20 □ of store floor area to 40 □ of parking area  
 max. desirable distance 300' between parking & door



MALL INSIDE

PARKING OUTSIDE



PARKING IN

INNER COURT



CENTRAL BUILDING

PARKING AROUND



LINEAR BUILDING

REAR PARKING &amp; ACCESS

INEFFICIENT PARKING LAYOUT  
 (40 □ parking serves only  
 7.5 □ of stores)

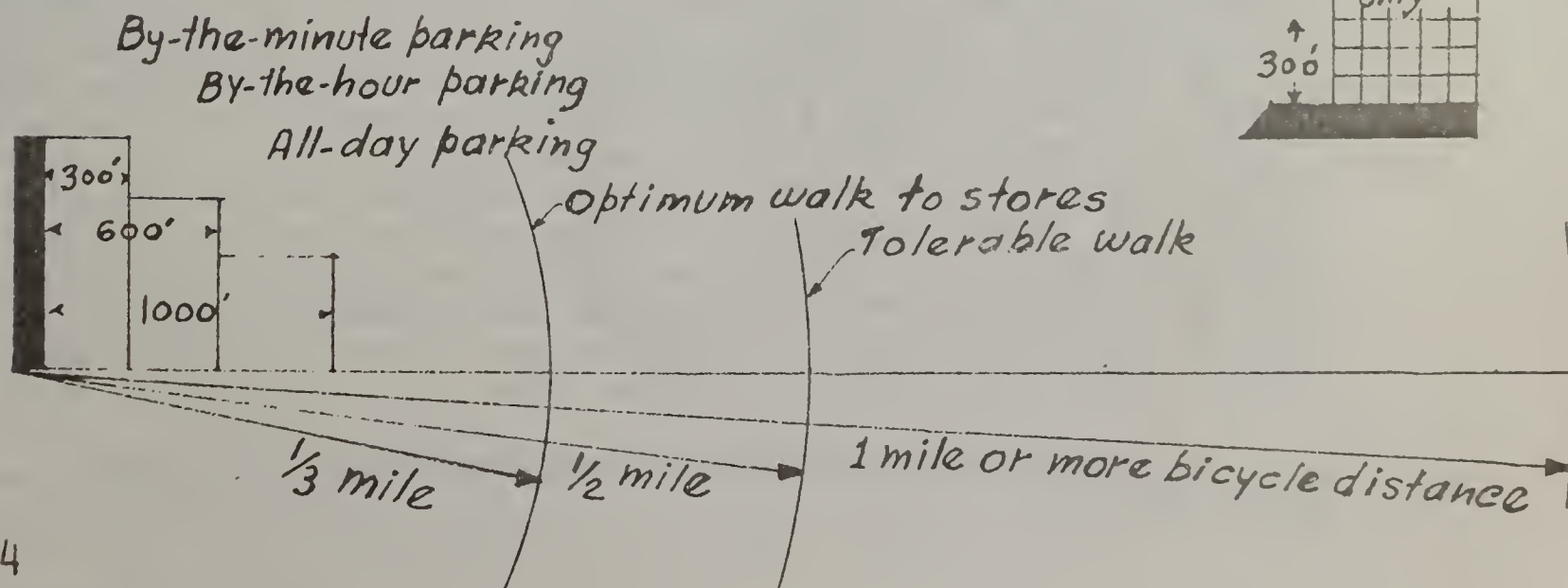
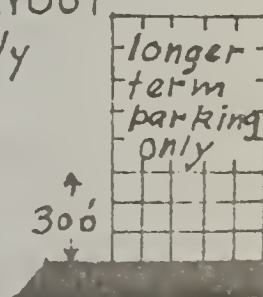


FIG.4

## ACCEPTABLE DISTANCES TO SHOPPING



institutions. If distances to be crossed are great and empty, however, (a special handicap in our winters) shopping will seldom develop along more than one side. Shrewsbury and Townsend show the limitations of this form. The Sears Crescent Building facing Boston's Government Plaza is an example at a larger scale.

Plazas can, however, be deliberately created at a scale which will work and which exclude interfering traffic. One such is Derby Square in Salem (see p. I-37); another is Inn Street in Newburyport (see p. I-28).

#### (5) The Grid System and One-Way Streets

The existence of a grid system of streets may prompt investigation of the possible benefits of pairs of alternating one-way streets, especially where this creates, in effect, a rotary around instead of through the CBD. This will not work, however, if traffic diverted from one of the pair overloads its narrower partner.

#### b. Topographical Constraints

Slopes or banks enclosing the CBD not only make it difficult to assemble enough land for stores with the associated level areas for parking demanded today but also repel shoppers unwilling to negotiate long steps or slippery ramps while laden with bundles or with children in tow. Slopes can also isolate the lower area from the higher in a visual sense, discouraging exploration of the unseen territory.

Slopes can sometimes be exploited to advantage to create two street-level floors, front and back, with passage between them in the interior of the building, thus doubling prime leasable space. The new Town Office Building in Millbury has utilized a sloping site in this manner and the same idea could work for business buildings. Walks on a gentler slope can be made attractive by offering a choice of shallow steps or ramps, dramatizing the breaks in level with imaginative landscaping. Derby Square illustrated on p. I-37 is treated in this fashion.

#### c. The Need for Off-Street Parking

There is an inherent conflict between the pedestrian's preference for a compact CBD and the motorist's desire to park nearby because of the amount of space required for parking. A typical busy store of 5,000 sq. ft. sitting on its own 100-foot frontage should by modern standards have somewhere between 15 and 30 parking spaces, yet there is room for only four along that frontage. When the spaces between isolated stores are filled in solidly to present the continuous shopping frontage preferred by pedestrians and to utilize high front-foot values to the utmost, the curb parking drops to two spaces per store. At the same time, traffic on the arterials is probably growing to the point where curb parking can no longer be tolerated. Thus the pressure arises to do one of two things: either to provide off-street parking nearby or to move to a highway site.

The problems with providing uncoordinated off-street parking lots are apt to be these:

- (a) the store's own lot is too small or too awkward;
- (b) the individual lots do not interconnect and thus would-be parkers create extra commotion in their hunt for space;
- (c) drivers will not enter off-street lots unless they feel confident of finding a space on the first try, preferring to cruise about waiting for a curb-slot to open, or even to double-park;
- (d) the store owner may lack the funds or the motivation (especially if he is not himself the tenant) to prepare the lot;
- (e) the developer of a new establishment may feel it is unfair if he has to devote more of his land to parking in order to comply with zoning when his pre-existing neighbors do not have to comply;
- (f) parking lots so placed as to interrupt the business frontage can in themselves become a factor in the fragmentation of the CBD.

The obvious solution is a parking pool. This may be privately sponsored, with store owners agreeing to expand and interconnect their individual lots or to invest jointly in a common lot. Where this is not feasible due to the antiquated pattern of development, the municipality can step in with its powers to purchase or, where necessary, to take land, construct parking and regulate its use. Another alternative is the creation of a parking authority, which will be discussed further in Chapter II D 3 b (3).

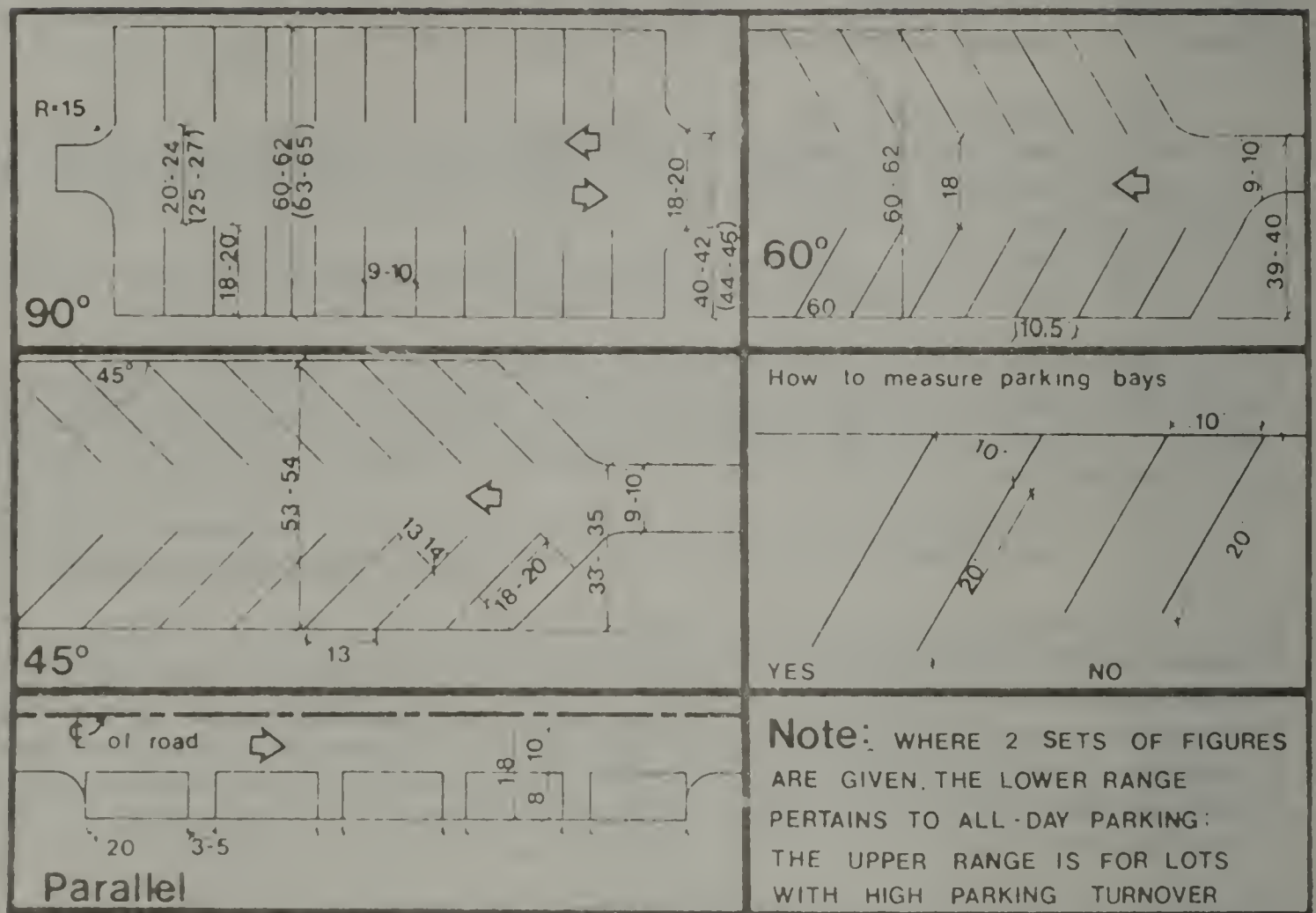
#### d. The Effect of Area Requirements for Parking

How much off-street parking is necessary? A ratio of as little as 3 spaces per 1000 sq. ft. of retail space will be tolerated perforce in the big older CBD's where a high proportion of customers either use mass transit or live and work within walking distance. More parking space than that is hard to come by without forcing out the very people who are the customers. A low ratio is also feasible in rural areas where stores are few, small and widely scattered along a road where curb parking is possible. At the other end of the scale are the shopping malls whose selling area is ample free parking; these will aim at 8 or more spaces per 1000 sq. ft. of retail.

The parking needs of the small CBD will lie somewhere in between. On the one hand, some of its customers will still arrive on foot and also, one parking space will serve more shoppers whose errands are brief than a space in a mall where shoppers spend hours. On the other hand, the small CBD is too compact to be able to rely on its short curbs for all the needed parking and the drivers inconvenienced thereby will drive on to the nearest mall. Accordingly, a suitable parking ratio is probably around 5 or 6 spaces per 1000 sq. ft. of retail space--less, if the space is occupied by specialty shops or offices attracting few customers, or if there are many non-driving customers, as in a college town; more, if food and convenience goods predominate. Put this ratio, which amounts to about 2 sq. ft. of parking for 1 sq. ft. of retail, together with the desirable maximum 300-foot walk from the parking lot to the store and some interesting geometrics result. In short, the area required for parking in itself acts as a physical constraint on the form, size and expandability of a CBD. (See p. I-23)



FIG.5  
CRITERIA FOR PARKING AND LOADING AREAS



### ALL DAY PARKING

Can be at some distance, up to 1,000 feet. Interconnections unimportant if spaces reserved. Minimum stall dimensions are acceptable. Should be lit after dark. Provide place to pile snow, unless it is to be carted away.

### BY-THE-HOUR PARKING

Preferably within 300 feet of stores, 600 feet maximum. Store entries should be visible from parking lot. Lots should be pooled or interconnected. Dimension stalls generously for people with bundles. Provide distinct pedestrian ways. Reduce walks by means of shortcuts, back entries. Mark stalls. Light well. Allow for snow piling or removal. Drain well.

### BY-THE-MINUTE PARKING

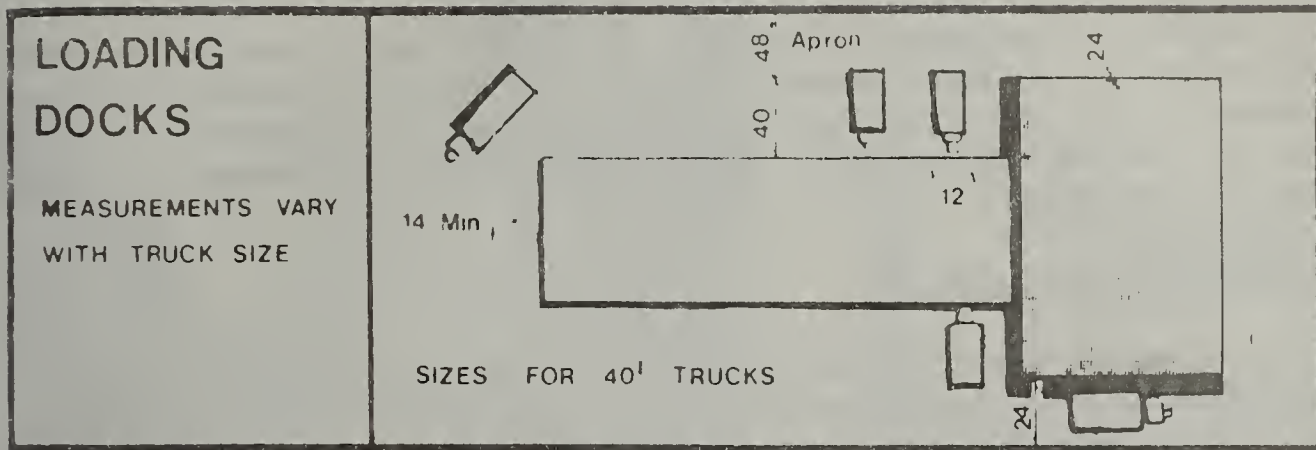
Close to store entries (front or back). Large enough to maneuver into quickly without holding up traffic. Do not allow backing into traffic. At visible locations, so time limit can be enforced.

### OFF-STREET LOADING

Bays large and high enough for size of truck expected. No maneuvering to interfere with traffic or parking circulation. Reserved spot for deposit of materials to be picked up or delivered.



## CRITERIA FOR PARKING AND LOADING AREAS (CONT.)



## OFF-STREET LOADING

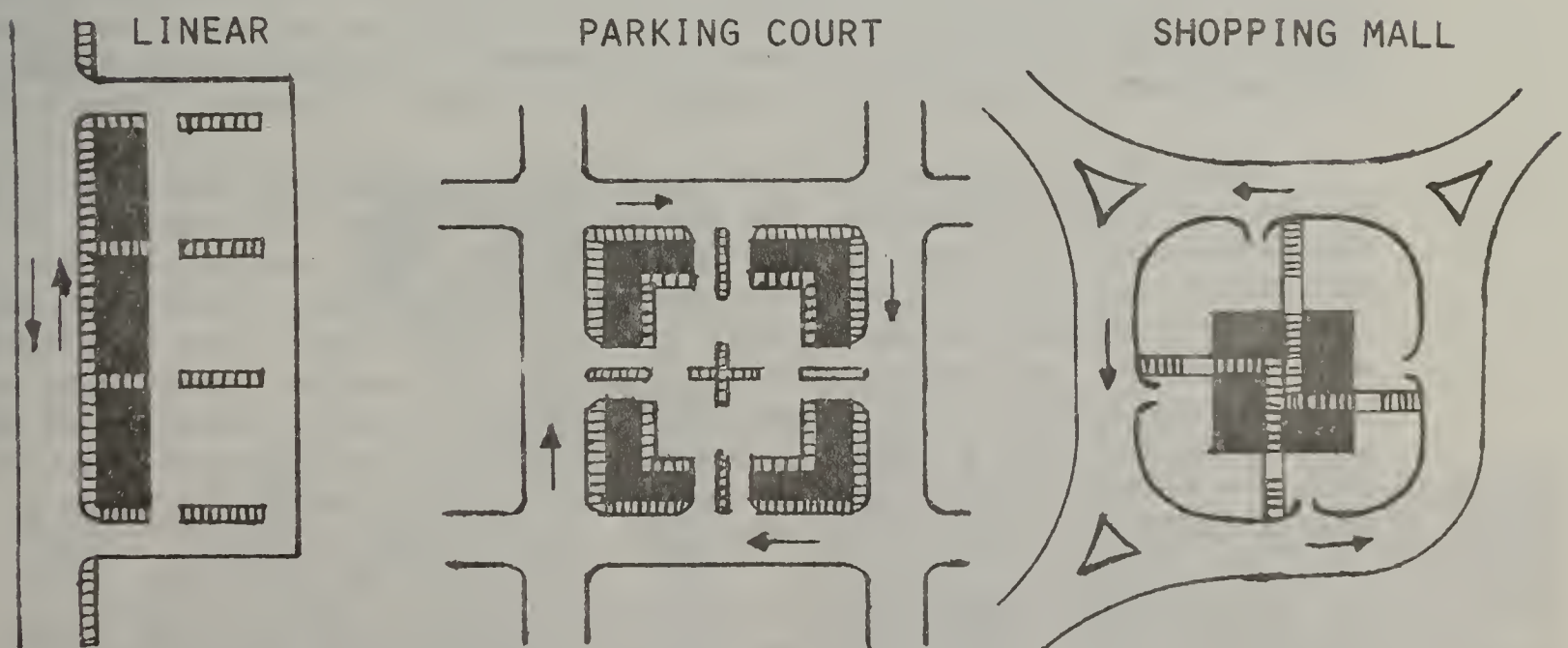


FIG. 6

SOME SCHEMES FOR TRAFFIC, PARKING AND PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION

Once having met the first requirement, sheer quantity of parking, one must begin to sort out the various kinds of parking. All-day parking for employees, by-the-hour parking for people with appointments or several errands, by-the-minute parking for quick pick-ups, special loading areas reserved for delivery trucks--each category has special locational and dimensional requirements and their intermixture injures all. (See pp. I-23, I-26)

A third problem associated with the provision of parking is that of making entrances to the stores as attractive from the parking lot as from the street. This shortens the walk and reduces the tendency to exceed time limits at curb parking spaces. Even older stores can manage to present a new face to the rear. (See p. I-28, Fig. 7)

#### e. Pedestrian Circulation

One of the potential strengths of the small CBD is its accessibility to the non-driver, yet few towns have done more than provide store-front sidewalks. If sidewalks extend beyond the CBD, many will walk as far as a third or half a mile from home and bicyclists may come from several times as far. Once within the CBD, the walking distance from bus, bicycle or car should not, ideally, exceed 300 feet. (See p. I-23) The walk between various stores and offices should be safe, comfortable and interesting if the shopping experience is to be a pleasant one. Large malls have this feature and try to supply artificially the interest which the small CBD can have in abundance.

Walks and small parks can be a very effective way of opening up business frontage which would otherwise suffer from lack of exposure to a main street. The utilization of block interiors helps to overcome the defects of linear over-extension and of the divisiveness of traffic in the cross- and T-formations. A second-story walkway also expands frontage. (See p. I-28, Fig. 8)

Walks in a shopping district will vary in popularity not only with the stores and sights alongside, but also with their physical comfort. To be on the sunny side is a help in the winter, but in summer pedestrians may seek the shade. Large, wind-swept or sun-dazzled plazas and constricted wind tunnels are avoided by the locally knowledgeable. Conditions underfoot are also important--an uneven pavement, puddles, icy patches, snow banks may cause people to shun the stores along that walk. One possibility in much-trafficked areas is a heated pavement. Connecting arcades are another solution, as effective in winter as under a hot sun. A new small block of stores in Sharon provides an example. (See p. I-28, Fig. 9)

Multi-story blocks of stores or offices, or a converted old barn, can sometimes create the popular galeria, with small stores and offices facing inward onto the full-height, sky-lit promenade. Passage through such a building can be an exciting element of the path system. The idea of the Crimson Galeria in Cambridge might be just the thing in a Victorian-type CBD with high buildings on small lots. A large old barn is not an uncommon thing to find behind a country CBD and could be similarly converted. There are a number of imaginative conversions to the galeria concept. One is "The Garage" in Harvard Square, Cambridge, where the one-time auto ramp provides access to a surprising collection of boutiques and eating places. At a larger scale, there is the former railroad station in Providence, R. I.



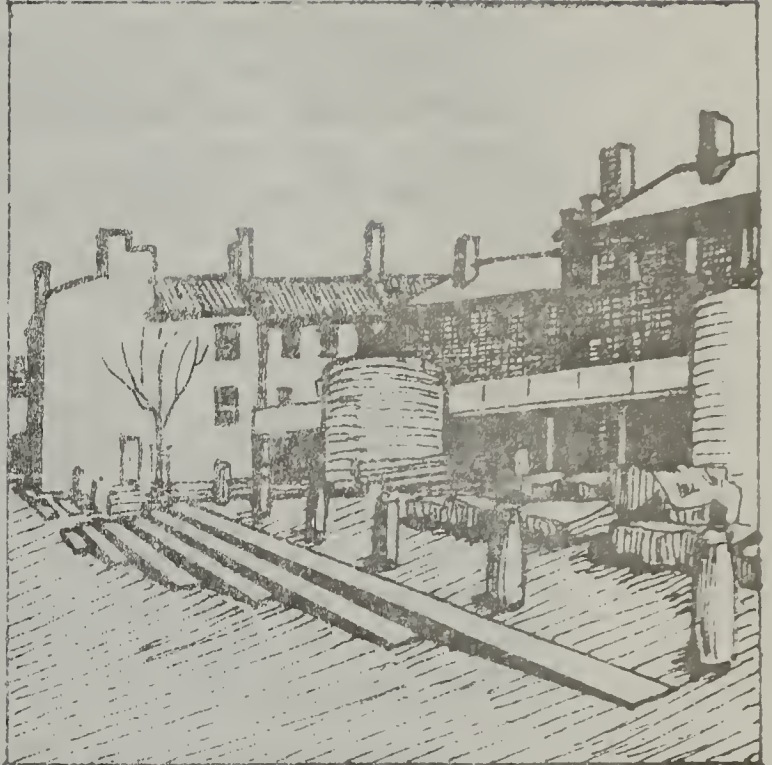
7



QUINCY:

BACKS OF MAIN STREET  
STORES FACING PARKING GARAGE

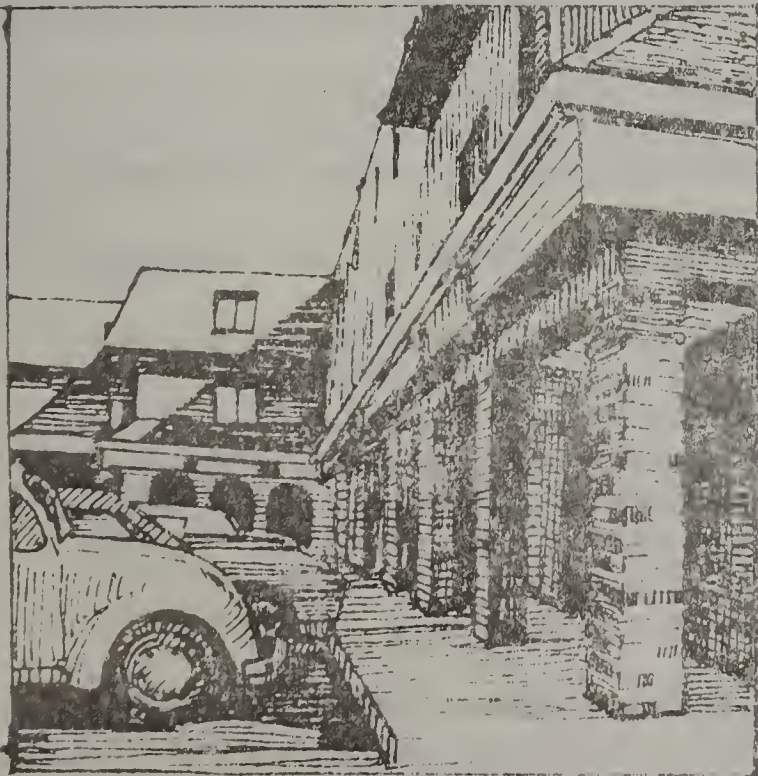
8



NEWBURYPORT:

MARKET SQUARE SECOND  
STORY BALCONY WALK

9



SHARON:

ARCADED SHOPS WITH APART-  
MENTS ABOVE

10



MAGNOLIA:

UNIFYING COVERED WALK



Another factor is safety. Dark alleys, unpopulated walks with angles where muggers might lurk, walks unprotected from crossing cars cause the shopper to choose another route. Several tools can be used to minimize this problem. One is site review, suggesting slight changes in the proposed placement of buildings, drives or walks to eliminate danger spots. In densely built-up CBD's, one can require new buildings to either abut (assuming fire-resistant party walls), or else to be sufficiently separated for easy passage and maintenance. The provision of curbs and screening across most of the frontage of lots open to the street improves pedestrian and vehicular safety as well as the looks of the area.

#### f. Land Use Conflicts

Many of the observations on compatible land uses in a CBD flow out of the desirability of good pedestrian and traffic circulation. "Dead" areas a pedestrian must cross or share with traffic should be placed outside rather than at the center of shops. Parking lots, gasoline stations, or telephone exchange buildings may be useful in themselves but should be placed at the periphery of the CBD (or possibly within interior parking lots) for these reasons. Offices and apartment buildings in the CBD do contribute a valuable captive market, but their ground floors should be given over to customer-attracting uses, so as not to interrupt the flow of shoppers.

Other uses do not belong in the average small CBD at all because of the large area they consume in relation to the number of customers served, for example, large display rooms for furniture and major appliances, or car sale lots. Uses which bear no relation to daily customer or client needs, such as factories, funeral homes and warehouses, and which furthermore are in themselves traffic generators, should also be shunted aside. A Post Office, bank, or library, on the other hand is welcome, because the potential buyers each pulls into the CBD outweigh the nuisance of the extra traffic.

To summarize CBD land use policies which will minimize conflicts:

Do include uses which support the CBD, that is, which:

- offer the retail and personal services for which people come here;
- help pull in customers for the above (Post Office, library);
- serve the business population (printing shop, lunch places);
- build in a captive market of employees, residents or visitors (offices, apartments, places of assembly or entertainment, provided the ground floor remains available for business uses; tourist attractions).

Don't include uses which don't support the CBD, that is, which:

- occupy space and generate traffic without serving customers or adding substantially to their number (factories, warehouses, fire stations);
- are meant primarily for drivers (gasoline stations; drive-in banks; laundry, film, or book-drops, unless so placed as not to interrupt

foot traffic seriously, for instance within a large parking lot);

- are designed for the occupant of a parked car (drive-in fast food service);
- occupy disproportionate space for the custom attracted (display rooms or lots for bulky items, cars, building materials, nursery stock).

The various items discussed in this section on Typical Plans and Problems all appear on the one-dimensional plan of the CBD. Now we will turn our attention to its appearance in three dimensions.

## 2. PROBLEMS OF DESIGN AND APPEARANCE

It is undoubtedly true that the long-time user of a given CBD no longer "sees" the area with a fresh eye. And it is probably also true that the first-time visitor is more alert to traffic signs and store displays than to the CBD's overall appearance. Nonetheless, if one looks to see why one CBD retains or augments its drawing power better than another offering similar goods, a part of the answer is that it is a pleasanter place to be. The average passer-by may not pause to analyze exactly why one area is more appealing than another, but those concerned with improving the CBD must cultivate this awareness. Hence the description below of the elements which enter successively into the impression made by the CBD.

### a. Identity

The driver in search of an unfamiliar CBD needs clues early enough so that he doesn't drive through it before he knows where he was. How can one tell one is approaching the CBD? Usually by some sequence of visual signals such as these:

- directional signs, name of town, arrow to Business District;
- a change in topography: in a low, wet countryside, the center is often on a hill; in tumbled country, it is on a plateau; in a valley, along the river;
- steeples of one or more important churches piercing the skyline;
- the gateway effect created by parks, cemeteries, or institutional buildings which mark the limits of the CBD;
- change in the character of buildings, from low and separated wooden residential structures to business buildings with one or more of these characteristics: different height limit, continuous frontage, different exterior facing, more and larger windows, different roof line;
- thickening traffic, more pedestrians, more traffic signs and signals;
- a change in the character of the street cross-section--more sidewalks, parking meters, painted lanes and spaces;



- different landscaping--either no trees at all or more formal plantings;
- a proliferation of signs, both for business and traffic;
- at night, a heightened level of illumination from street lights, advertisements and shop windows;
- often, a central landmark, green, or monument;
- typically, a major route intersection.

Many of these visual signals can be deliberately exploited to give definition to the CBD; which ones, of course, depends on the place.

Directional signs are an elementary, yet sometimes overlooked device.

The general location will have already been fixed by history, but the CBD's overall visibility is a consideration to bear in mind when expanding the business zone or modifying access roads.

The gateway effect can be deliberately created by considered placement of a prominent new building or open space.

The physical distinctiveness of business buildings or blocks can be reinforced by zoning setback and height requirements which are designed for business rather than residential use of land.

Sidewalks, street trees, street furniture and lighting standards may for good functional reasons be given special treatment within the CBD.

Signs and sign illumination can be restricted to the CBD proper and may then be of somewhat greater size or brightness than elsewhere.

A central green--not necessarily large--with a monument or flagpole is an unmistakable point of orientation.

#### b. Rhythm of Business Buildings

##### (1) Spacing

The first thing one notes is the spacing between buildings. In some 19th century industrial towns, optimists erected solid brick business blocks side by side. These are easy to identify as the business center, but have problems all their own. One problem is finding enough space between and behind such buildings to reach and develop parking and delivery areas. Another is finding enough tenants to occupy the upper floors. Solutions to these drawbacks have to be tailored to the particular CBD, but in general are apt to require an expensive effort to clear out suitable space and access for parking and to modernize upper stories for use as offices or apartments. This often implies a redevelopment program, with the authority and funds to buy, raze, construct and sell.

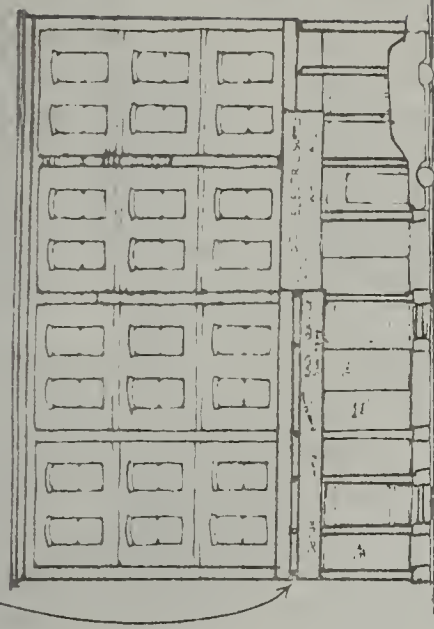
FIG. 11

Signs obscuring architectural details

Blocked in windows

Old signs painted over

Billboards disrupt skyline

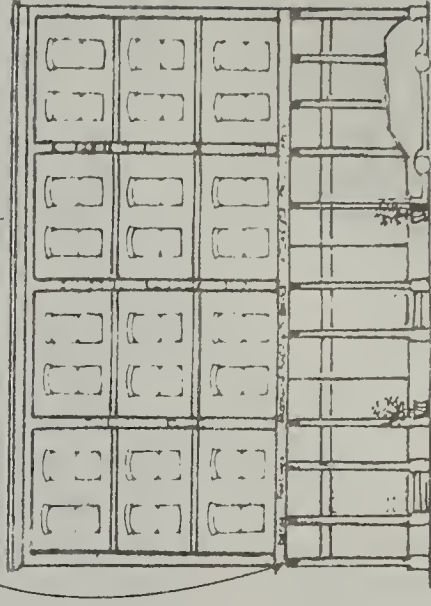


### Existing elevation

Brookline Village - Washington Street frontage facing U.S. Post Office. This block is predominantly built of brick and contains many fine details which are seldom seen in other areas of Brookline. Cast iron columns, intricate brickwork and granite lintels add to the appearance and architectural heritage of this block and should be preserved.

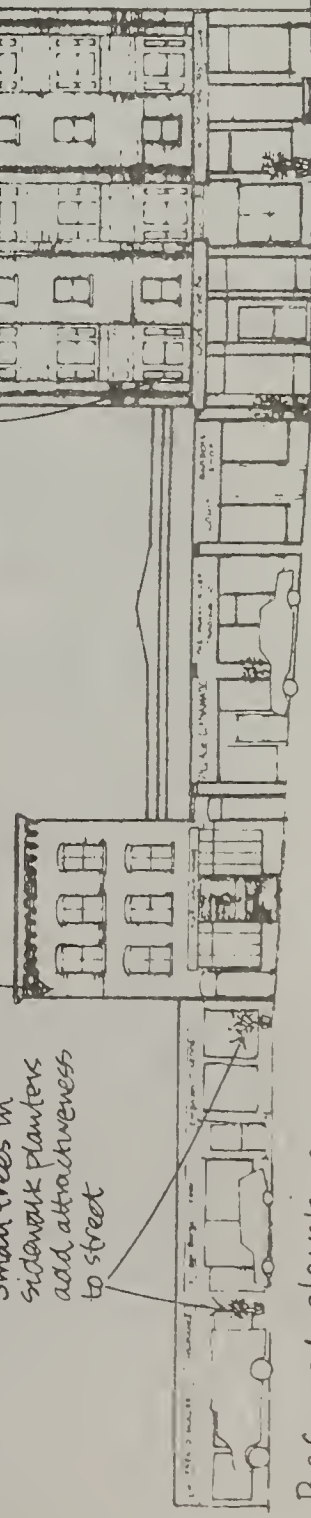
Restored signs in keeping with period

Bay windows restored



Restored brickwork

Small trees in sidewalk planters add attractiveness to street



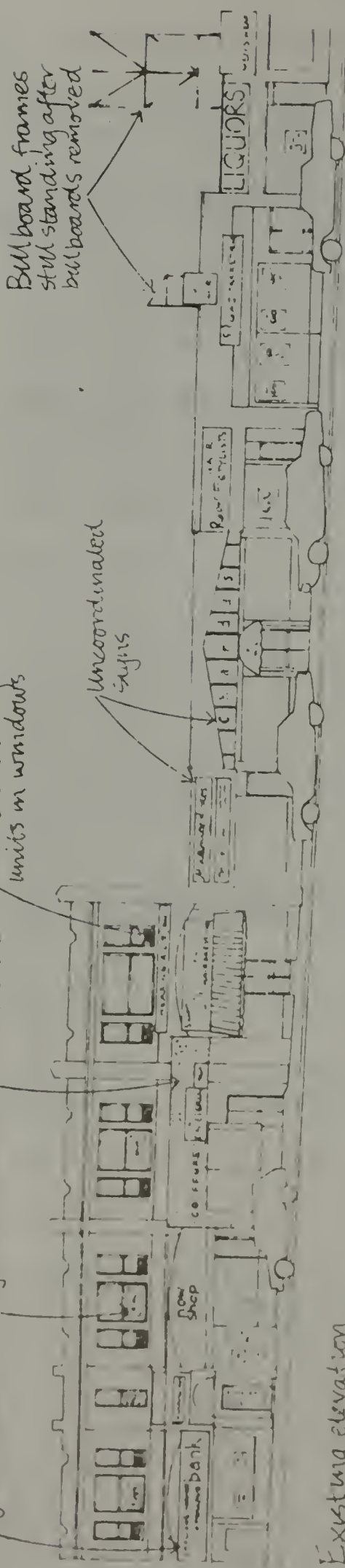
### Preferred elevation

Signs should be a subordinate element within the architectural framework and not obliterate and obscure ornaments. The removal of billboards enhances the appearance of the block.

BROOKLINE VILLAGE

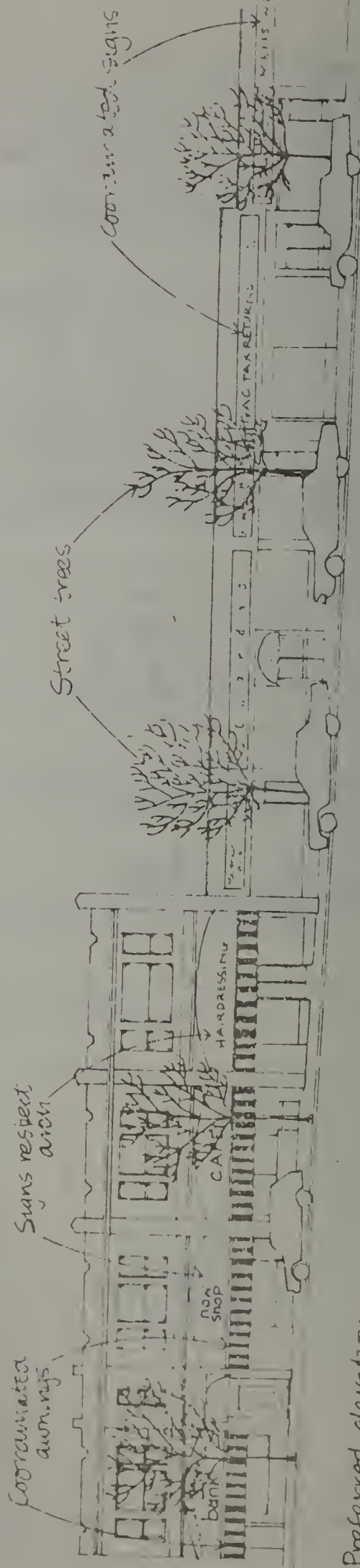


Sign over arch  
Signs in windows  
False facade  
Air conditioning units in windows



Existing elevation

Coolidge Corner Beacon Street facade east of Harvard Street  
Block built in 1917, originally a series of stone arches over individual storefronts now mostly obscured by a variety of signs which are not contained within the originally provided architectural frame.



Preferred elevation

Shows how coordinated awnings and signs improve the architectural appearance of Coolidge Corner. The signs have been lined up but retain the original lettering style. Also by removing old billboard frames a cleaner appearance is achieved. Street trees contribute to the visual improvement of the street.

Another pattern sometimes found in linear CBD's is a one-story row of store-fronts. Again, the business area is easily recognizable for what it is. However, unless the stores have preserved their original shared architectural features, the block as a whole is apt to be indistinguishable from any other nondescript block in some other place. The impression becomes worse if some fronts are boarded up or old signs are allowed to rust and rot. Whether the adjoining stores are in single or separate ownerships, an effort to emphasize the distinctiveness and upkeep of the block as a whole will set a better tone for the CBD.

Perhaps the most typical pattern in the small CBD is a loose collection of separated buildings. Many will consist of partially converted dwellings, some will be new business buildings in a wide variety of styles. Problems associated with dispersed buildings have already been mentioned: the difficulty of recognizing the area as a CBD, longer and often uninviting walks between stores, the inefficiencies of trying to provide separated on-site parking lots. Some of these difficulties can be turned to advantage.

Where buildings are close together, they may be unified at eye-level by such devices as a continuous canopy, as was successfully done in Magnolia years ago (see p.I-28). Where buildings are widely separated and the town desires to retain the old residential flavor of the CBD, this can be done by continuing to require yards and landscaping between buildings and by limiting their height and bulk to a residential scale. It is also possible to form a design advisory review board to encourage the design of new buildings of the same basic mass, roof lines and materials as the older residences. If the CBD happens to be eligible as an Historic District, such controls can be relatively easily enforced; if not, Brookline has shown a way to devise environmental standards for inclusion in the zoning bylaw, as illustrated on page I-32.

The visual identity of the CBD may be further underscored by such simple voluntary agreements, applying to old and new owners alike, as complementary colors of paint and awnings and comparable styles of signs.

The walks between buildings can be made a pleasure by a uniformly good pavement (brick, for example), landscaping and lighting. The disadvantages of dispersed parking can be overcome by the provision of internal connections between parking lots with some additional pooled parking to compensate for those sites which can provide no parking of their own. The sketch plan developed for Sharon illustrates the concept (see p. I-34).

## (2) Height and Roof Line

Older brick multi-story buildings and long, low business blocks contrast with their residential settings both by the difference in height and the absence of a visible roof. Since floors above the second bring marginal returns for business uses, a town has a choice of height limits for new business buildings. If the CBD is to be reserved exclusively for business, one, or perhaps two, stories are all that is needed and will express the change in use visually as well. If, on the other hand, the town wants to keep residents in the CBD and also wants to retain the familiar residential scale, then zoning can be so designed as to encourage one or two floors of



PROPOSED PARKING AND CIRCULATION: SHARON



- BUILDINGS
- ▨ PRIVATE LAND
- ▤ CIVIC PARK
- ▧ PUBLIC WALKS
- ROADS & PARKING

BILLINGS  
STREET BEND  
DEVELOPMENT

# SHARON CENTER STUDY

Prepared for  
SHARON PLANNING BOARD  
SHARON, MASSACHUSETTS

by  
The Planning Services Group, Inc.  
Consultants Cambridge, Mass.



FIG.13



CHANGES IN ARLINGTON CENTER





apartments or offices over the ground floor. The similarity can be carried further by controlling the bulk and roof line as well, as was mentioned in subsection (1).

#### c. Condition and Appearance

Lack of maintenance, clutter of signs, obvious vacancies, will signal a depressed or even dying CBD. Only a handful of inattentive or insolvent owners may be responsible for such visual blight, but all CBD tenants suffer. What is to be done?

There are two approaches to use singly or in combination: the quick fix-up, clean-up organized by the merchants as a group, or the gradual enforcement of standards for exterior treatment each time some tenant needs a permit for a change to the storefront or sign.

Brookline has used the other approach and has set up a well thought-through series of guidelines for gradual exterior improvements, including maintenance, restoration of original architectural features and the design and illumination and placement of signs.

#### d. Streetscape

By "streetscape" one means the combination of all publicly provided elements of the street. The list is a long one: pavement, sidewalk, curb, street lights, utility poles, parking meters, trees and plantings, benches, letter boxes, litter drops, hydrants, telephone booths, bulletin boards or kiosks, directional signs, historic markers, monuments, flagpoles. Certain privately provided elements such as awnings, window-boxes, fences or hedges, also enter the picture, but they are not the town's responsibility. A handsomely coordinated streetscape is a particularly strong unifying factor in the appearance of the town center and as much of a benefit to the public at large as to the storekeepers.

The major initiatives the town can take in this regard are in the provision of well-designed streets and sidewalks and the installation of suitable landscaping. It can also push to get utilities buried underground so that ugly poles and wires can be replaced by well-designed lights, although it must be recognized that this will be financed out of a surcharge on individual electric bills. New cables for telephones and lights, however, can be buried from the start at no extra cost. Employment of a good landscape architect is the key to achieving the desired visual coordination of these elements and of all the haphazard street furniture listed above.

Observers of a particular CBD may have long since spotted its particular defects in lay-out and appearance and will be asking themselves how these can be overcome, given present patterns of land ownership and current development regulations. These are the topics of the next section.

### 3. PROBLEMS OF LAND ASSEMBLY AND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

The physical disorganization of the typical small CBD is both the result and cause of uncoordinated actions by independent owners. Coupled with



development regulations which treat each lot equally, regardless of its actual size or location, individual owners despair of solving their problems independently. The technique for collective action through a Development Corporation will be described in Sections D and E below, but there are a number of supplementary methods for increasing individual ability to act.

#### a. Ownership Patterns

The average CBD is composed of mostly rather small lots each owned separately by individuals, institutions, trusts or the public and these in turn can be sorted into occupant, non-occupant, resident and absentee owners and also by types of ownership, whether outright, condominium or partial rights (easements). Occasionally, some one or two of these owners will hold several parcels, but often these are not contiguous. It is no wonder, then, that it is difficult to pool parking space, or to extend a new path or driveway cross-lots on a voluntary basis. Nonetheless, the ownership pattern of each CBD should be inspected for some combination of ownerships which may form a solid base for significant action.

Imaginative cooperation between owners, and owners and the town, can accomplish a surprising amount. Derby Square in Salem is a fascinating early example. In 1815, the two owners in condominium agreed to partition their joint mid-block, block-deep property in such a way as to give land for a town hall over a market to the Town of Salem, subject to a promise by the Town to build the structure promptly. Each owner reserved frontage along one side of the plaza facing the new town hall. All sides benefited--the Town got a needed facility on a free site; the owners created new and longer frontage for themselves on the busiest square in town; the public could move freely through the block. (See p. I-37)

A more commonplace example is when adjoining owners agree to pool their parking lots and access thereto. Sometime, to avoid friction over improvement and maintenance, most of the lot, minus a few reserved parking spaces, will be given to the town to manage.

#### b. Some Alternatives to Conventional Purchase

Sometimes expense or legal restrictions make conventional outright purchase inadvisable. Here are some of the alternatives.

##### (1) Easements

The utility of easements--that is, the acquisition of limited rights over a property--is sometimes overlooked. The most common easement is a right-of-way under or over land (for drainage and mains, for drives and walkways). There are other possibilities. For example, a block of adjoining owners might grant easements on their frontages to a body which would undertake to restore and improve them.

##### (2) Long-term Lease

Suppose a town feels it owns a good site for a post office, but cannot, under the terms by which it acquired the land, sell it off for a private use



## AN EXAMPLE OF BUSINESS/MUNICIPAL COOPERATION

## ESSEX STREET

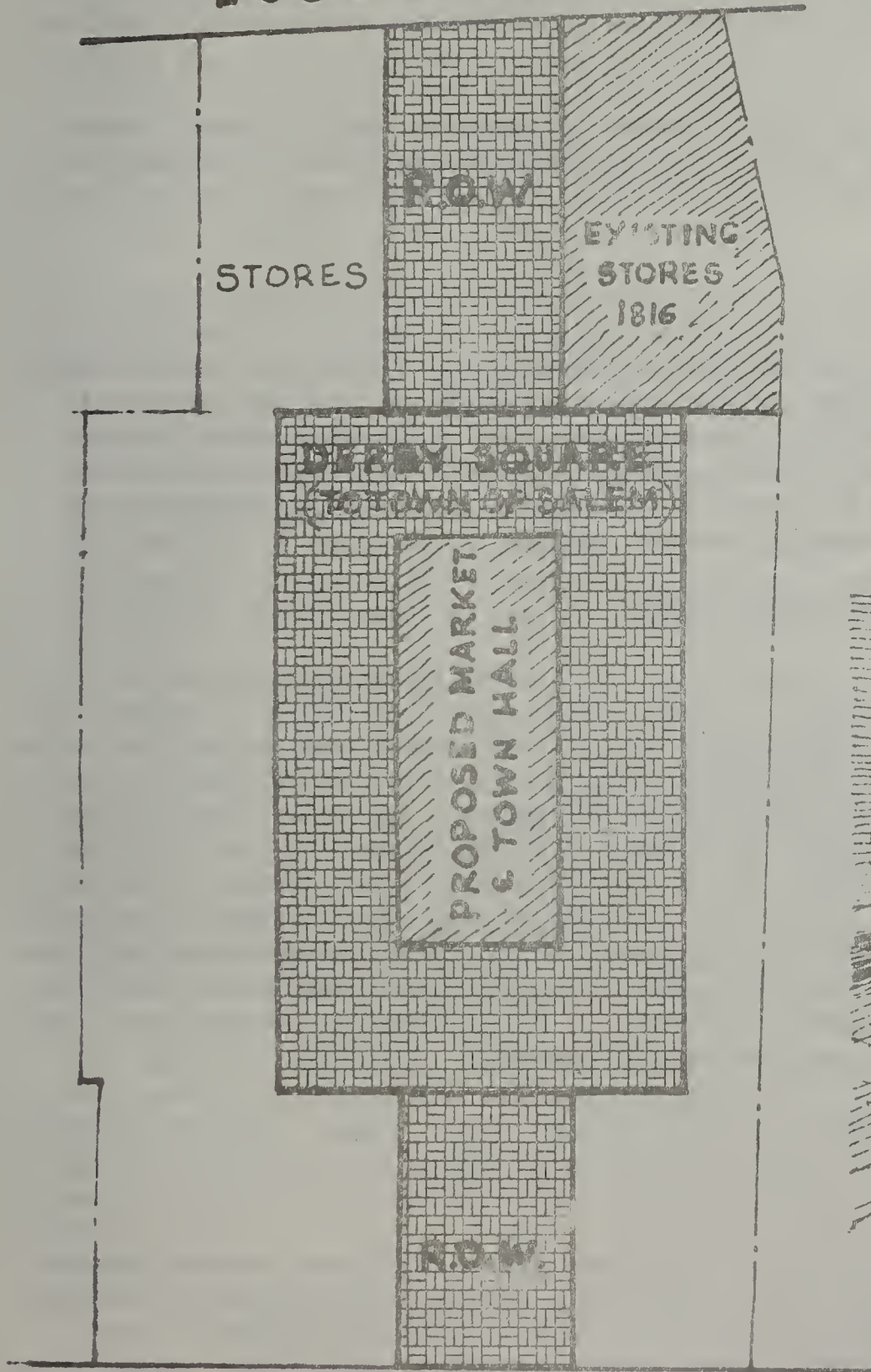
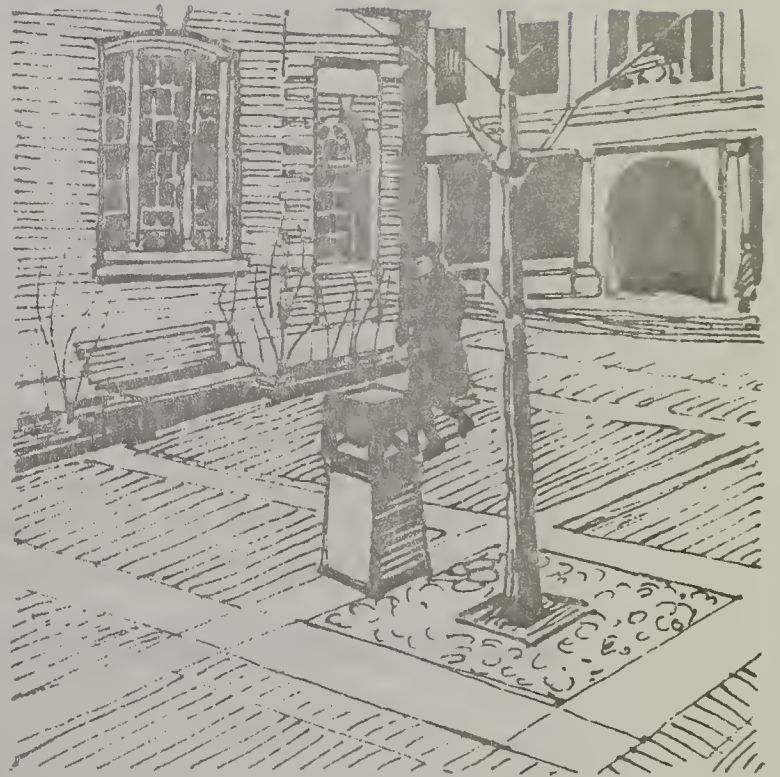


FIG. 14 FRONT STREET

FIG. 15



1816 - John Derby and Benjamin Pickman, Jr., heirs of Elias H. Derby are tenants in common of this property and give Derby Square to the inhabitants of the Town of Salem subject to certain conditions, i.e.;

1. Town must build Town Hall over Market to the dimensions specified within 2 years or pay \$5,000.
2. Town must maintain access, circulation and building, or forfeit its property.
3. Abutters must use brick or stone for future buildings.

As part of this arrangement, Derby and Pickman split the remaining property between them, dissolving their joint tenancy.



(most post offices rent from private owners). A long-term lease might be the answer, as it would allow a developer to erect a building for the purpose specified in the lease and make money renting it, even though he does not own the land.

Another example of the use of leases is from Rutland, Vermont, where private land was leased at \$1.00 a year to enable the public to develop, manage and insure a parking lot while still collecting taxes from the lot's owners.

### (3) Friendly Taking

Then there is the so-called "friendly" taking. This is a useful device when a clouded title inhibits private redevelopment or sale of a site or building. The town "takes" the property from a willing seller by eminent domain for a stated public purpose. Municipal ownership clears the title and the property can then be paved for parking, or a vacant church can be remodeled for use as a community center, and so on.

### (4) Transfer of Development Rights

The concept of TDR, or transfer of development rights, originated in a big-city business area (Chicago), where the problem was how to prevent the razing of an historic building producing little income on a high-value site without having to purchase it with public money. The solution was to allow the owner to sell the hypothetical building package he could legally have erected on this site to another developer willing to pay for the right to increase allowable development on his vacant site by that amount. In effect, this halved the use of one site and doubled it on another without making a net change in the district. We have heard no suggestions for application of this principle to the small CBD, but it is not hard to imagine how it might be used to compensate the owner of a lot ideally located for a public purpose or occupied by an historic building.

## c. Development Regulations

### (1) Zoning

Occasionally there is truth in the complaint that development regulations are anti-development. In an effort to secure needed standards ensuring protection of legitimate public interests in the development of new sites, a town will enact requirements which cannot be met by the owner of an older site or building. He is exempt as long as he sits tight, but if he wants to make a change, he must either comply or secure a variance.

This bind can be resolved in a number of ways. On-site parking is usually the most critical problem in the CBD. If there are many older properties here which will be unable to conform to desired standards, it is the public's responsibility to help provide municipal parking if it wishes to maintain the services and tax revenues its CBD provides. However, since store owners benefit as well, they too have an incentive to cooperate in other ways if they cannot provide the land.

Another way to resolve the deadlock is to restudy the zoning requirements themselves; they may be poorly drafted, antiquated, or have been borrowed from some other town's bylaw without adaptation. Once the standard zoning features have been reviewed, one may go a step further and consider providing incentives for extra performance. For example, if a developer is able to tuck parking underneath his building, he might be allowed a greater percent of lot coverage than normal.

## (2) Building Codes and Fire Districts

Building restrictions also affect the way properties can be developed. In Melrose, for example, the requirement that all new building within the CBD had to be of fire-resistant construction meant that owners of parcels poorly located for business use could not economically replace existing wooden houses or storage sheds until zoning was changed to permit apartments as an alternative use to single family or business. Where requirements for fire-resistant construction apply, a town may also consider permitting the suppression of side yards between small business lots, provided that requirements for parking, emergency access and light and air are still met, especially where some residential uses are also involved.

## (3) Special Permits

Often certain types of business development will be controlled by special permit where it is felt special scrutiny is needed, even though the use itself may be similar to others allowed by right in the district. One example is that of a bank which proposes to operate a drive-up teller window; obviously, this could have an impact on traffic in the public street. Another might be a fast-food franchise; typically, these sit in midst of large parking lots which interrupt the pedestrian flow so helpful to the small CBD, but they can be redesigned to avoid this effect.

Up until recently, only the Board of Appeals had the power to grant or deny special permits and was not obligated to follow or even seek the advice of the Planning Board. Now, under the amended Zoning Act of 1975, a town may assign various classes of special permits not only to the Board of Appeals, but also to the Planning Board, the Board of Selectmen or to a zoning administrator. Who is to wield this power over special permits in business districts should be given some thought. By the nature of their primary responsibilities, the Board of Appeals is most attuned to individual hardship, the Planning Board to functional criteria and the Selectmen to costs and revenues. In this particular context, the Planning Board is the logical reviewing body.

## (4) Site Plan Reviews

Site plan review is usually required before issuance of a special permit. Some states, such as New Hampshire, allow the Planning Board to review any non-residential site plan and give it the option of disapproving the plan, but in Massachusetts the Planning Board's powers are only those of persuasion unless a special permit is involved as described in (3) above. A very few towns, such as Carlisle, have vested site plan review powers over any business development in the Board of Selectmen, who do have the power to



turn down a proposal when it creates difficulties for the community not removed by compliance with the explicit provisions of the zoning bylaw. Equitable treatment of developers facing such potentially arbitrary review powers demands that the governing criteria for site review be clearly spelled out in advance. In Carlisle's case, the town circumvented a difficult legal situation arising out of the Selectmen's refusal to approve a proposal by authorizing the Selectmen to take the parcel by eminent domain, which they have done. This is hardly a universally applicable solution, however.

A possible compromise is to include additional criteria within the zoning bylaw itself (beyond the usual measurable ones of height, setbacks, coverages, parking, etc.), directing the Planning Board to examine the adequacy of such site-specific features as drainage, circulation and pedestrian safety. In exercising these "ministerial" functions, the Board is not trespassing into the "judgmental" area as to the desirability of the use which is reserved for the special permit.

#### (5) Summary

What this Section 3 says, in brief, is that the invisible legal matrix of ownership and regulation has a powerful influence on the visible development which does or does not result. This matrix should therefore be thoroughly examined for each particular CBD before plans are made for physical change.

#### 4. RECAPITULATION: THE SMALL CBD versus THE SHOPPING CENTER

Small CBD's are much aware of the loss of business to shopping centers. Certainly these have advantages over an old, raggle-taggle collection of small stores. The highly visible shopping centers appeal to the motorist because they are located on highways and have ample, well organized, maintained and lighted parking. They offer a very large selection of standard items bought weekly or monthly and can afford to do so because of the large consumer market within easy driving range. The buildings are neat and well-kept, goods are well displayed and advertised. The larger malls have sheltered interior walks enlivened with displays, exhibits, concerts and opportunities for people-watching--friends or families may go as much to have an outing as to shop.

But the advantages are not all on one side. By definition, the centrality of the CBD makes it the handiest for walk-in clients and (if parking is tolerable) for quick errands by car. It offers community and professional services not available elsewhere. Here personal relationships between businessmen and clients can flourish. Lower rents mean that it can harbor small outlets for special lines or types of goods appealing to a market limited either as to area or taste. It is a place with a history and the capacity to reflect change; if one goes there regularly, one belongs. In short, the average trip to the small CBD is made for a combination of reasons, of which shopping is only one.

The tabular summary on p.I-42 presents the relative potentials of an idealized regional mall (dominated by department stores), a highway mart

(dominated by a food store) and a small CBD (mixture of retail, services and community facilities). Not every example can exploit each potential of its prototype, but the table will serve as a check list. The small CBD should build on its potential strengths; it cannot expect to accommodate the high volumes of goods and shoppers that mark the shopping center without losing the variety and personality which set it apart. The small CBD's catch-word should be:

I N T I M A C Y    ---    N O T    I N T I M I D A T I O N    !



# COMPARISONS, PROTOTYPICAL SHOPPING AREAS<sup>1</sup>

FEATURES	MALL	MART	CBD	FUNCTIONS	MALL	MART	CBD
<u>Location</u>				<u>Economic Functions</u>			
High visibility	yes	yes	no	Daily staples	?	yes	yes
Major highway	yes	?	no	General merchandise	yes	no	no
Other main road	?	yes	yes	Misc. retail	yes	?	yes
Local streets	no	?	yes	Specialties	?	no	?
At center	no	no	yes	Personal services	no	?	yes
Walk-in trade	no	no	yes	Financial services	?	no	yes
<u>Site &amp; Building</u>				Professional services	no	no	yes
Large lot, bldg.	yes	yes	no	Business offices	?	no	yes
Many lots, bldgs.	no	no	yes	Commercial enter-			
Pooled parking	yes	yes	?	tainment	?	no	?
Short walk from				<u>Community Functions</u>			
most parking	?	yes	?	Public facilities	no	no	yes
Level land	yes	yes	?	Churches, institutions	no	no	yes
Visual identity	yes	yes	?	Ceremonial events	no	no	yes
Single overview	yes	yes	no	Participation by			
3-D views	?	no	yes	owners, employees	no	no	?
Inside walks	yes	no	no	Symbolic values	no	no	yes
Outside walks	?	?	yes	<u>Social Functions</u>			
Doors face parking	yes	yes	?	Informal outing	yes	no	yes
<u>Management</u>				Casual encounter	no	no	yes
Single owner	yes	yes	no	Personalized service	no	no	yes
Many owners	no	no	yes	Exhibits, concerts,			
Chain stores	yes	yes	no	drives	?	no	?
Resident tenants	no	?	yes	Visual stimuli	yes	no	?
Joint advertising	yes	?	?	Historic values	no	no	yes
Town shares cost <sup>3</sup>	no	no	yes	<u>Note:</u>			
<u>Controls</u>				The more of the CBD's "?"-marks can be turned into a "yes," the better it will be able to capitalize on its strengths.			
Unified design	yes	yes	no				
Unifying treatment <sup>2</sup>	yes	?	?				
Flexible site review	yes	yes	?				

1. Exceptions may be found throughout, but these represent reasonably complete regional malls, highway supermarts and small CBD's.
2. Unifying treatment such as streetscape, frontage treatments, signs.
3. Town is responsible for public ways, parking, lights and maintenance thereof.

## C. THE FUTURE OF THE SMALL CBD

Considering all the obstacles, one may well ask whether revitalization of the small CBD is practical at all. In short, can it be saved? This section develops the argument that population pressures do call for change, that unplanned changes happen every day and that the energy spent on piecemeal makeshifts could well be redirected towards a more productive transformation.

### 1. FORCES FOR CHANGE

The small CBD can develop ways of responding to change, but must first recognize what these changes are. Trends and possible responses are described below.

#### a. Population Changes

##### (1) Residential Growth

It is not news that many once-rural towns have grown, whether because local jobs have become more plentiful, or because, more likely, they are in the path of metropolitan development. To take just one example, population increased in all but one of the 39 towns surrounding the central city of the Worcester planning region; the total rise for the 39 towns between 1950 and 1970 was 31 percent. Projections made by the regional planning agency on the basis of 1960 data indicated a possible rise of another 150,000 or so between 1970 and 1990. Even if updated projections revise this figure downwards, it is clear that the arrival of such a number will not go unfelt, for half of the 39 towns had fewer than 5,000 inhabitants in 1970 and none exceeded 20,000.

##### (2) Household Formation

Equally well known is the trend towards smaller household size, which means that the number of families grows even faster than the population. Since many purchases are made more on a household than a per capita basis (pots and pans as against groceries), this too has an expansionary effect on the market.

##### (3) Transients

In some places, the potential number of shoppers may increase without a corresponding increase in the permanent number of residents. Travelers and tourists, seasonal residents and college students are individually transient, but their dollars stay behind. These transients are possible allies in cases of CBD's located in rural areas whose population is declining. Such out-of-the-way CBD's will have to be inventive about supplying goods, or creating tours or events, likely to attract the interest of the particular type of transient market.

##### (4) Implications for the Small CBD

What does this growth in the market portend for small CBD's? Much depends on what they do to capture it. Promoters of shopping centers are



well aware of the new market and unless the CBD can offer something different or better, it may find itself losing its once-loyal customers as well.

Some towns have attempted to protect their CBD's by restricting locations for highway shopping centers. What often happens is that the shopping center is then built just beyond the town line; one can think of several towns thus ringed. The new Zoning Act requires towns to notify their planning region of any local project which might have an impact on another town; most shopping centers certainly belong in this category. Regional planning agencies should develop criteria for the evaluation of the impacts of proposed shopping centers on existing CBD's, traffic patterns, residential development and environment and attempt to guide their future locations accordingly.

The other side of the coin is to ensure that the older CBD's continue to function well enough to justify their commercial existence. Not all CBD's will be able to accommodate the full growth of the new market. Most should, rather, specialize in what the shopping center cannot supply, namely neighborhood conveniences, low-volume specialties and community services. CBD's threatened by the loss of their existing market to the shopping center will have to do something more, that is, remake themselves into an attractive image. Either way, whether the CBD is faced with too much growth or not enough, it must respond.

#### b. Changes in Consumer Habits

##### (1) Dependence on the Automobile

Everyone is aware of the change in buyer habits due to the increasing prevalence and use of the automobile; highway shopping could not have grown up without it. Conversely, the public transit services which once fed customers into the CBD have withered. By now, however, there is a perceptible movement the other way. The cost of driving makes people think twice about long trips for short errands and even about maintaining a second car. Attempts are being made to revive public transit, especially for non-drivers such as the elderly. For all of them, the CBD is the logical destination and its survival has a bearing on the broad goal of energy conservation.

##### (2) Frequency of Shopping Trips

Another major change occurred with the development of the refrigerator and then the freezer. This made it possible to shop just once a week for large quantities. The discontinuance of free home deliveries is another factor causing people to drive to the supermarket. However, as more and more people live in quarters too small to store large reserves, the neighborhood store is useful once more. Perhaps local merchants could capture additional repeat customers by finding a way to restore low-cost deliveries, say by pooling deliveries from several stores to one address on certain days.

##### (3) Working Women

The phenomenon of the working wife is having an influence in several ways. Family incomes have risen, even when individual wages have not. The

Bureau of Labor statistics for 1972<sup>1</sup> give a profile for certain jumps in expenditures as family income rises. For example, routine household expenditures for a family of three differ little whether its income is between \$10-12,000 or \$15-20,000, by only \$90/year combined for groceries, house-keeping and personal care items. However, the higher-income family spends \$234 more to eat out. The supermarket caters to the routine needs, but the CBD is in a good position to compete for the extra cash spent on restaurants. Comparable data has not yet been released for other types of purchases, such as clothing, gifts, etc., but one would expect a similar pattern--a relatively small rise in basic purchases as income goes up, but a big one for the options and extras a CBD can stock.

The working wife has less time to spend on the odd errand and may find it is accomplished faster in the small CBD than at a distant shopping center and its long check-out line. Hence the importance of reserving handy, short-term parking spaces for the use of the commuter.

Another side effect is that her major shopping trips, with or without the family, tend to take place in the evening or on Saturdays. Most small CBD's shut down after working hours. It might make sense for them to stay open on at least those evenings when workers come in to bank their pay. If so, attention should be paid to after-dark illumination and safety. As to Saturdays, that is the time to sponsor community events which will draw the residents into the CBD. Attractive places to eat and simple outdoor or indoor amusements will also entertain the family.

#### (4) Credit

Local merchants have countered the big stores' credit facilities by developing the Mastercharge card and similar plans. New developments in the offing, such as telephone connections to bank terminals to verify checks, will have to be countered in their turn if the CBD is to serve strangers as well as familiar faces.

#### c. Social Trends

The 1950's particularly were marked by the constant moving about of employees in search of advancement. Involuntary assignment to another location is not as readily accepted as it once was. Other factors, such as the current difficulty of building new houses, switching jobs, or of finding a satisfactory job for the other working spouse at the new location are keeping some other families home. The twin ideals of "establishing roots" and of "grass-roots participation" lead some families to choose small-town life over amorphous suburbia. Small towns are beginning to grope for ways to stem the loss of the young and the elderly. While there is no way to gauge how wide-spread these attitudes are, they do all converge on an interest in maintaining a lively town center. An active CBD is a part of this, and so are the many opportunities to engage in civic activities and, not to be overlooked, the sheer possession of an attractive symbol of community life.

---

1. Bureau of Labor Statistics Report 448-1, Table 3.



#### d. Summary

Taking all these trends together--the continued growth of many small towns, fresh interest in local conveniences, a greater tendency to stay put --there is hope for the continued usefulness of the small town center and its CBD. But the small CBD cannot ignore the rise of competing shopping centers stimulated by the same growth. It should fight to maintain its inherent advantages of convenience and civic services while ceding high-volume trade to the shopping centers. This requires a two-pronged approach: enough flexibility to overcome the CBD's inadequacies and general grubbiness and some way of confining shopping centers to roles only they perform.

#### 2. THE CHANGING CBD

Many of the changes required of a CBD in response to new trends are physical in nature. Listed all at once, the effort, time and money required may seem overpowering. Yet year after year, some street is paved, another is widened, a parking lot is opened, a building is replaced or lost to fire, a tree cut down or planted, a new store front applied or a sign removed (see p. I-34, Fig. 13). If the same energy and money could be coordinated into planned improvements, how much might be accomplished! And it has been done.

#### 3. PLANNED CHANGE: TWO APPROACHES

Newburyport's Inn Street project is a successful example of planned change. Not long ago there was nothing in these buildings but dead pigeons and dust; now they are filled with thriving small shops, offices and apartments. Ample municipal parking has been provided nearby, but within the shopping area the pedestrian rules and has a choice of window-shopping front and back, of exploring second-floor establishments by means of an overhead walkway, or of resting in the charming interior park. The project illustrates how three basic strengths were exploited to develop what has become a specialized shopping adventure attracting people from three states to this out-of-the-way town. Subtle handling preserved these strengths: the presence of a distinctive period style; the convenience of the location for residence as well as stores and offices; and the ability to offer a setting designed to attract a special market interested in choice--not necessarily expensive--goods.

Newburyport was an urban renewal project. Almost two decades of urban renewal money fostered many such examples of planned change--few CBD projects during that period did without it. Consequently, none of the examples we are aware of in this state were developed under conditions which illustrate our contention that a directed concentration of small public and private improvements can result in significant physical transformations.<sup>1</sup>

Massachusetts towns still have the power to undertake urban renewal either under a Redevelopment or a Housing Authority. But the big funds are, for all practical purposes, gone. The state can offer very little and the federal assistance available under Community Development grants are only a

---

1. There are examples in other states, however: David City, Nebraska; Marshall, Michigan and Denison, Texas are all small towns which have successfully upgraded their CBD's using only town and private money.



trickle to what they once were. Even when funds were still plentiful, there were many reasons why localities resisted the temptation. The three major fears were of dislocations caused by the Authority's power to condemn property for private (not just public) re-use, of unresponsiveness to the local political structure and of the snarls of red tape.

It is possible by a Special Act of the legislature to allow towns to form a Community Development Agency which can have all the powers granted under Chapter 121-B and can include as many of the existing municipal departments concerned with planning and physical improvements as desired. The advantage is that such an Agency is directly responsive to municipal control while remaining eligible for state and federal assistance. Such an umbrella agency is a logical next step in places which already have functioning professional departments and perhaps also authorities concerned with various phases of local development.

In small, non-professionalized town governments, however, a practical alternative is a partnership between the municipality and a (preferably non-profit) development corporation controlled by the area's owners and merchants. This approach differs from an Authority's (or Community Development Agency's) in three ways. The partnership will have to depend primarily on local money, although there are still many forms of supplementary assistance available, as detailed in Chapter II D. Secondly, no one can be forced to move except, as has always been true, as a result of public takings for public use. Lastly, as a consequence of the more limited funding and powers, the partnership will have to move more slowly, breaking the project down into financially digestible bites.

With the exceptions just listed, the proposed partnership can accomplish everything an Authority can do. A Town can alter or install public facilities, buy and if necessary take land for public purposes, enforce codes and amend its zoning and regulations. The Corporation may, as its members decide, act to buy or sell buildings and land intended for private use; restore, raze or replace the buildings it owns and raise the money to do so. Together, the Town and Corporation can enter into a working partnership to coordinate public and private improvements. In short, there is nothing that was done in Newburyport which could not, given the time and determination, have been accomplished by such a partnership.

The greater time needed for a gradual approach is an advantage for CBD's which, unlike Newburyport's Inn Street area, are alive and functioning. Gradual change minimizes disruptions. Few come under pressure to move and none are forced to unless a public taking is involved. The cost may well be less, since much construction can be paid for out of current appropriations or normal private reserves for improvements without the necessity of large-scale borrowing. The CBD retains the flavor inherent in an area which has evolved in tune with the town's history. Not least, there is much more flexibility to modify details of the program as market conditions and customer preferences change over time. The next chapter will describe how this gradual approach can be put in motion.





## Chapter II

### P L A N N I N G   T O   R E V I V E   T H E   S M A L L   C B D

The aim of this chapter is to lay out an orderly approach to a purposive and systematic program for revitalization of a CBD. The original impetus for such a program can come from many sources--the town, the businessmen, a Chamber of Commerce or Board of Trade--one or two owners or institutions with a large stake in the area, a citizens' group or even an historical society (Cazenovia, N.Y.). Its details may be worked out by professionals in physical and economic development, or by dedicated laymen with the help of technical advice. No matter who provides the initial impetus and final design, however, responsibility for carrying the plan through should rest in those with the power to act on it. The ones with power to act are the public officials and the owners and occupants of the CBD. Each has a separate sphere of action and their work must be coordinated to be effective.

The following suggestions will be presented in a form which a town can carry out with its own man-and-woman power. If the local study committee or task force chooses to short-cut some of the labor and uncertainties by paying for professional advice, this same list can be used as a check on the consultant's progress.

#### A.     S E L F - A N A L Y S I S

Since the typical CBD contains commercial, community, residential and symbolic values, there may well be some conflicts in setting goals which keep these values in an acceptable balance. Before people are asked to choose between them, there should be an appraisal of the economic and physical factors which limit realistic choice.

##### 1.   IDENTIFICATION OF THE CBD'S ROLE IN THE MARKET

Even a rudimentary market analysis can answer some important questions. The statistical material involved in finding these answers should be available in the regional planning agency's office, if not in the local library.

##### a.   What kinds of retail and services are available in this town?

- (1) Make a list of businesses by type within the CBD (visual inventory, City Directory if there is one).
- (2) Make a separate list of businesses at other important business locations in town (same sources).

##### b.   What is the CBD's position as compared to regional sales?

- (1) Figure sales per capita for the town in those categories appropriate to the CBD (U.S. Census of Retail Trade and Selected Service Industries, 1972, sales for town; divided by town's population, U.S. Census 1970).



- (2) Compare this data to similar data for a sub-region composed of this town and its neighbors (but omitting the central city if it adjoins).
- (3) Compare this data to state-wide averages for the same categories, and to the data for 46 small CBD's in Table 3.

c. What are the CBD's present markets?

- (1) Neighborhood "walk-in" market: estimate the number of dwelling units within 1/3-mile walk (assessors maps).
- (2) Competitive market for standard items: estimate the population which lives closer (in driving time) to the CBD than to the nearest competing shopping centers (population distribution map if available from region, or else a guess based on a combination of total population and residential land use maps).
- (3) Specialized markets: ask purveyors of specialized goods or services from how far their customers are coming, what distinguishes these customers (age? income? hobby?) and where their nearest competitors are. Also check whether nearby institutions may grow, e.g., colleges.

d. What percentage population growth is expected in each of these markets?

- (1) Neighborhood market: assume vacant residentially zoned parcels within 1/3 mile of CBD are fully developed (assessors and zoning maps, zoning bylaw).
- (2) Competitive market: adapt population and land use projections supplied by regional or town plans.
- (3) Specialty market: guided by suggestions from c. (3) above, estimate growth of appropriate income or age groups (regional projections).

e. Is there reason to expect a growth in the transient market?

- (1) Consult region as to plans for new highway exits in the vicinity.
- (2) Check regional plans for major parks, beaches, tourist attractions.
- (3) Trends in seasonal/resort development (ask nearby Planning Boards).

This exercise should serve to highlight the particular categories in which the town's per capita sales stray from the subregional, state and small CBD averages. (Town data can be roughly adapted to the CBD proper by knowing what services are offered outside the CBD--see a. (2) above.) A reasonable goal for lagging sales may be the small CBD average for the category. Study of projections will hint at how big a percentage increase in sales may be expected as population within the market areas grows, if the CBD can hold its own. Local knowledge of what the CBD offers and what

shoppers must go elsewhere to buy will yield some clues as to the kind of store or service which might make a go of it here. One should now be able to say in broad outline whether the CBD is meeting a reasonable level of present needs, whether it is realistic to plan for additional growth and whether to concentrate on basic or specialty lines.

## 2. DESCRIPTION OF THE CENTER'S ROLE WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

The town center's role as the focus of commercial activity was investigated above. But this is not the center's only role and may not in fact be its most important one.

### a. What are the center's present community resources?

- (1) Inventory all public and institutional facilities and ownerships in the center (observation, assessors tax exempt lists)
- (2) Check any plans or hopes these may have for expansion or sale of facilities and sites. Are any moving to another part of town?
- (3) Talk with public officials and social service agencies and clubs to determine what new services are desired and where they might be housed, for example Senior Citizen or Youth centers, club buildings, offices for volunteer agencies, pools, rinks or playgrounds.

### b. Does the center play a distinctive residential role?

- (1) Describe residential development around the center: density, dwelling types, market prices and rentals, as compared to other parts of town (land use maps, realtors).
- (2) Types of people who live--or would like to live--near the center (Census Enumeration District data for larger places is sometimes available from the region and will show differences in family size, age groups, incomes, number of rooms per unit; if there is a local Housing Authority, it will have information on the housing needs of the town's elderly and low-to-moderate income families; if neither source is available, much can be deduced from the annual police listing by address, age and occupation, supplemented by rental and space information from the larger rental properties).
- (3) Effect of current zoning bylaw on potential residential development near the center (whether and where multi-family use is permitted and how much).

### c. How much of an asset is the center to the town's economic base?

- (1) Health of the real estate market (history of recent sales and rentals; building permits).
- (2) Valuations per business acre (and per high density residential acre if applicable) in CBD as compared to acres in other uses (assessments).



- (3) Estimated operating costs of municipal services per CBD acre as compared to other areas, such as for schools, police, fire, street maintenance and lighting (from departmental data and interviews).
- (4) Any impending major capital improvement projects, such as street widening, replacement of utilities, in CBD (town engineer or selectmen).
- (5) Job opportunities in center (ask businessmen).

d. Are there strong symbolic values associated with the center?

- (1) Note particular monuments, buildings, sites, landmarks, trees (observation; historic society).
- (2) Review center's use in staging community events.

From this review, one should begin to develop a feeling for the center's current importance as a source of tax "profits," as the permanent site of civic activities and as a potential focus of specialized forms of housing which in turn help nourish the CBD.

### 3. IDENTIFICATION OF THE CENTER'S PHYSICAL PROBLEMS

The easiest way to grasp the extent of physical problems is to present them graphically. If perchance the local study committee has no member experienced in the preparation and interpretation of maps, the regional planning office can describe the standard procedures in enough detail to get the committee started.

One needs a base map to begin with, showing streets and property lines within the center. One inch equals 100 feet is usually a convenient scale. Most towns already have assessors maps of the center. If buildings are not shown thereon, they may be roughed in from aerial photographs where these exist (ask regional planning office), or from a Sanborn Atlas such as insurance agents sometimes have.

a. Topography and Natural Conditions

If the town does not already have "topo" maps of the center, the 10 or 20-foot contour intervals can be sketched in from a U.S. Geodetic Survey map. Bunched contours will show where streets are steep, lots are hard to grade, or access is difficult to obtain.

Drainage is often the most critical of the natural conditions. The map should indicate any low areas which have been known to flood under extreme conditions and any wetlands where water lies at or near the surface part or most of the year. Streams, ponds and easements for surface drainage should also appear on this map. Any evidence of erosion should be noted. Possible sources for this information are various and may have already been assembled by the local Conservation Commission. They may include studies by the Army Corps of Engineers of significant floods in the past, flood hazard maps (approximate at this stage) prepared for the federal Flood Insurance Administration under HUD, and Soil Conservation Service data on alluvial soils or muck and peat.

Normal construction may be impeded in some places by outcrops or ledge, in others by poorly compacted fill, especially if the fill contains organic matter such as garbage or stumps. Such data is generally available from local memory and inspection and should be flagged on this map.

The composite map will alert one to the physical limits imposed on construction in the center, whether due to sharp changes in grade, poor drainage or flood hazards, or to foundation problems.

#### b. Existing Land Use

A color-coded map showing how each building and lot in the area is used is essential to an understanding of the center's pattern of development. Business uses may be subdivided as finely as appropriate into categories showing retail, office and personal services, services to motorists, storage/wholesale/warehouse facilities, manufacturing. Residential uses are generally shown as single and multi-family; sometimes separate designations are also used for two-family and 3-4 family buildings. Mixed uses may be indicated by two colors, with the ground floor use's color placed at the frontage line. Public buildings (school, town offices, fire stations, etc.) are often labeled as well as colored, as are semi-public buildings such as churches and lodges. Open uses should be shown as well, namely parking, open storage, active recreation, landscape-parks. Lots and buildings which are vacant should be so marked. This information is best obtained by inspection, although aerial photographs may be helpful in spotting open uses.

From this map one can quickly see how well the various uses have begun to sort themselves out and where there are unhappy or inefficient combinations, such as a single-family house surrounded by parking lots, or a gasoline station interrupting a busy block of stores, or a block with many upper-story vacancies.

#### c. Ownerships

A map showing which major parcels, or several scattered parcels, are owned by a single entity sometimes reveals important opportunities for land assembly and points to those owners whose cooperation can spark action. Assessment records provide this information.

#### d. Circulation and Traffic

Congestion and accidents plague many town centers. Where this is the case, the following information may be relevant for mapping.

- Width of streets (traveled way and right-of-way).
- Location of sidewalks and paths.
- Average daily traffic on major streets (yearly ADT for state highways at certain check-points is available from the state Department of Public Works; the local traffic department can run counts for streets and turning movements where data is desired).



- Frequency of collisions (police keep records of location, time, type and severity of accidents).
- Location of bus stops, if any.
- Responsibility for improvements (private, town or town-county, state).
- Condition of traveled way and walks, if not uniformly good.

If circulation problems are serious, it will probably take a trained traffic engineer to unravel them, but sometimes a simple solution, such as removing a bus stop or parking lane, or prohibiting a certain left turn, can result in noticeable improvement.

#### e. Parking Inventory

A map can be devised on the basis of field observation to show the following.

- Location and number of curb and off-street parking spaces open to the public.
- Other private parking lots and estimated capacity.
- Applicable time limits on parking; meters, if any.
- Ownership of off-street parking areas (from map of ownerships).

From these maps one can calculate the ratio of parking spaces available to the public per 1000 sq. ft. of retail and office space and see whether these are within reasonable walking distance (300 ft. preferred for shoppers, 600+ ft. acceptable for all-day parking). Complaints about the unavailability of parking can then be analyzed to discover whether this is due to an actual shortage of spaces, to their poor placement, or to causes related to management. Watching the turn-over of spaces on a typical day may show that part of the problem is that employees persist in using short-term spaces intended for shoppers, whereas outlying lots lie empty. Or part of the problem may be that shoppers are avoiding lots which are poorly drained, littered or dark.

Sometimes the fundamental problem is that parking is not free, as it should be if the small CBD is to compete with outlying shopping centers. Merchants, in fact, often try to overcome this problem by reimbursing parking fees to their customers. It would be more to the point for merchants to help subsidize free parking lots directly and to assist in the enforcement of time limits.

#### f. Utilities

In towns where there is a fragmentary utility system, it may be important to note which parts of the center as yet lack the capacity to provide sanitary sewerage, storm drainage or water supplies and pressures capable of serving more intensive development in the future. The town or system's engineer will have this data.

#### g. Building Conditions

Obviously deteriorating structures should be noted on a map. Conditions observable from the exterior are often, but not always, a give-away as to the possible life of the structure. The building inspector's help may be enlisted if needed to identify those buildings which are in need of major internal reconditioning (wiring, plumbing, fire-protection) as well as structural repairs.

Decisions on where to make major physical improvements in the center, such as clearing a site for parking or opening a new access drive, will be influenced by the relative soundness of the buildings which may lie in the way. Conversely, a vacant but sound building may lend itself to rehabilitation for a community facility or for apartments.

#### h. Visual/Historic Inventory

Data on noteworthy historic features can usually be provided by the local historical society. (If no historic inventory has yet been made, the Massachusetts Historical Commission can help the local society to get started on one.) Visual ratings are more subjective, but then, so are the reactions of those who visit the center. Chapter I B 2 listed the various components of one's impression of the center: clues as to its identity, its building rhythms, its appearance and the distinctiveness of the streetscape. Things to look for which can be noted on a map follow.

- Location of buildings distinguished for their history or architecture; historic sites and markers.
- Presence of trees and landscaping versus the absence thereof.
- Poles and overhead wiring versus underground wiring and attractive lighting.
- Regularity of building rhythms versus irregularity.
- Cluttered facades arising from undisciplined versus tasteful placement and lighting of signs.
- Sidewalks cluttered by haphazard street furniture versus inconspicuous or harmonious placement thereof.
- Presence of unifying elements such as compatible materials and colors, architectural detailing, repetitive elements such as awnings, hedges, etc. versus jarring disharmonies in style and treatment.

Block frontages which have already evolved some semblance of harmonious appearance can establish a locally characteristic base for visual treatment of less successful blocks. One further suggestion: photographs of block frontages help one to see them objectively, at one remove.

The series of maps describing the center's physical problems will serve to establish some realism on choices for the center's future. Does topography



permit expansion, or the relocation of streets? Is there enough vacant land and does it have the bearing qualities and utilities to permit more intensive development? Is it more practical to design and zone for distinct land uses or for a mix? Will radical changes in the center's lay-out be easy due to the patterns of ownerships and clusters of run-down buildings, or does the multiplicity of sound, small ownerships indicate a gradualist approach? Can additional traffic-generating uses be permitted without strangulation of traffic? Is the need really for more parking, or rather for better management of what exists? Does the center have marked elements of visual and historical character worth retaining?

#### 4. IDENTIFICATION OF LEGAL CONSTRAINTS

A part of a center's problems is sometimes due to inflexible legal restraints which make it uneconomic or illegal for individual owners to develop in response to market demands. Conditions vary so from place to place that one can only touch on their variety here.

##### a. Zoning Bylaw

The single bylaw with the most impact on the center is that of zoning and the most influential zoning provisions are usually those for use, yards (or coverage) and off-street parking.

##### (1) Use Regulations

Use regulations should be reviewed for compatibility of permitted uses (see Chapter I B 1 f). One feature to check is whether zoning allows higher-density residential development in the area or nearby. This becomes important when it is desired either to strengthen the neighborhood walk-in market for the CBD, or to provide housing suited to special needs near the town center--or most likely both. If such development is allowed, the terms of the bylaw should be checked to make sure that allowable density is reasonable in view of the size and cost of parcels and with regard to the capacity of streets and utilities. Provisions for the livability of multi-family residential sites should be included and their impact on surrounding uses and traffic should be subject to site plan review.

##### (2) Development Regulations

The effects of existing development regulations, particularly for the center's businesses and institutions, should be re-examined from two points of view. First, do they protect the community by providing for adequate off-street parking and loading, setbacks and landscaping? Secondly, is compliance with these provisions in fact feasible on the typical site? If the answer to either is no, the regulations are probably in need of revision and also there is a probable need for supplementary parking lots.

Since zoning is a technical matter, the Planning Board (or its consultant, if any) and the Board of Appeals should assist the study committee and affected property owners in this portion of the study.

## b. Other Legal Constraints

One or another of the possible constraints listed below may have a bearing in a particular case. Any such local peculiarities should be noted and resolved before a plan is allowed to hinge upon them.

### (1) Deed or Title Restrictions

A key property may not be usable for the desired purpose because the title is unclear or in probate, or because the original terms of the gift or taking were limited to specified uses. Re-use of public park land, for example, involves getting approval from the state legislature. Or there may be covenants between neighboring private owners, such as driveway easements or an agreement that neither will increase the height of his building.

### (2) Fire Districts

A few CBD's are subject to a special Fire District which limits methods of construction to certain (usually more expensive) types or else requires a minimum spacing between buildings greater than the yards called for by zoning.

### (3) Miscellaneous

Apparently unrelated regulations can have unpredictable effects. A certain street may resist widening because it has been declared a "Scenic Road." A designated "National Landmark" cannot be touched without official approval. A desired curb cut on a highway may be looked upon with disfavor by the state. A local ordinance setting a minimum distance between a church and a bar may inhibit conversion of a fine old house to an inn.

Granted, detailed investigation of the above items can await a later planning stage, but the possibility that they may limit the plan should be borne in mind.

## 5. EVALUATION: STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The foregoing analyses should make it possible to frame realistic goals. A good way to start is by making a tabular summary of the area's assets and problems, as has been done for Millbury in Chapter IV.

### a. The CBD

Which market(s) should the CBD try to serve--the neighborhood, the town, the sub-region? What type of growth will these markets support--no growth, moderate growth, substantial growth, specialization--or is decline unavoidable? Does the neighborhood market need to be strengthened by allowing higher density residence nearby?

Is the CBD too important to the town as a source of revenue to allow consideration of its transformation to uses with lower assessments? Would apartment construction compensate for such a loss?

Is the CBD a significant source of local jobs?



Do physical constraints seriously limit more intensive development of the CBD? Or its expansion? Can the limitations be overcome by certain capital improvements? Are these of a costly nature?

Would growth of the CBD complicate a bad traffic situation? Would it trespass on existing residential values?

#### b. Civic Center

Is the town well served by its center? Is there need for new or expanded public and institutional facilities? Can room be found for them? Or is some decentralization advisable to serve other neighborhoods, or to find better sites or buildings?

Does the center have recognized emotional and historic values? Or are these so marginal or negative that a more impressive civic center could be started elsewhere? Could some public and institutional sites in the center then be readapted for private uses?

#### c. Specialized Residential Area

Is there a demand for multi-family housing? Private, subsidized, or both?

Can the area in and around the center accommodate such housing, i.e., is there suitable vacant land, a system of utilities, adequate circulation?

Would apartment dwellers benefit from proximity to the civic center or to the CBD? Are there elements of these which might be improved to render better service to these tenants?

### B. FORMULATION OF GOALS

There will be cases where the CBD is so clearly a self-sufficient area that any changes thereto can be undertaken at the initiative of the businessmen, with the town being involved only to the extent of normal appropriations for minor street and parking improvements. Such cases are probably the exception, however; in most, there will be a question of balance between the center's business, civic and residential functions. In that event, the public at large has an interest. It must also be remembered that a two-thirds vote is required for any zoning amendment and for any bonding by the Town. It is therefore not only the democratic way but also the course of prudence to solicit public opinion before plans are drawn.

#### 1. REVIEW OF APPLICABLE GOALS

Considerable guidance as to the desirable directions of development can often be found in goals which have already been expressed by various bodies.

##### a. Town Goals

Most towns which have undertaken a comprehensive (or "master") planning program will find reference therein to goals affecting the town center as

seen by the Planning Board of the day. Another possible reference is to the surveys of citizen opinion conducted by many local chapters of the League of Women Voters.

b. Local Growth Policy Committee

Local Growth Policy Committees are currently being formed in response to an act passed in 1975. Results of their deliberations may be expected before 1977. One of their functions will be to scan, update and reconcile prior local statements of goals. These updated goals and concerns will in turn be reviewed by the regional planning agency and then the state planning office to see how the ideals of home rule can best be preserved without unwise distortion of over-arching economic and social needs.

c. Regional Goals

All planning regions have been required to state their goals. The level of detail will rarely reach down to the individual town center, but certain general goals may well have an impact on all. Policies on the dispersion or clustering of commercial and residential development, or the relative emphasis on local highway and street improvements as against the construction of new freeways, or policies for reviving public transportation in smaller towns as well as in high-density areas, may each influence the survival of small CBD's.

d. CBD/Town Center Goals

Comparison of the prior statements with the range of CBD/Town Center development alternatives arrived at during the course of the special study committee's investigations should enable the committee to further limit the range to locally somewhat acceptable choices. Now is the time to try to formulate these choices simply.

By way of example, one might begin with questions such as these.

The study committee has determined that the market can support more retail and services in this town and that the CBD can be expanded. Would you prefer them to locate mostly in:

the CBD \_\_\_\_\_  
in highway shopping centers \_\_\_\_\_  
in neighborhood centers \_\_\_\_\_  
out of town \_\_\_\_\_

(or)

The study committee has determined that, although the market can support more retail and services in this town, the CBD cannot physically accommodate this growth without conflicting with established needs for the expansion of (specified) municipal facilities and (specified) institutions. Which functions of the town center would you most like to emphasize:

business \_\_\_\_\_  
civic and institutional \_\_\_\_\_  
mixture as before \_\_\_\_\_



(or)

The study committee has determined that only limited business growth, if any, can be expected in this town and also that CBD valuations are not at present a significant source of tax revenue. Which choices most nearly represent your opinion?

The CBD's captive market should be strengthened by allowing more intensive residential development nearby\_\_\_\_\_

The town should make those minimum investments in (certain specified) improvements necessary to maintain the CBD's present standing\_\_\_\_\_

The gradual transformation of the CBD to non-retail uses should be encouraged\_\_\_\_\_; if yes, check which of the uses for which the study committee foresees a possibility you would like to see instead: (certain specified) community or institutional facilities\_\_\_\_\_; professional offices\_\_\_\_\_; low-density apartments\_\_\_\_\_; public park and recreation\_\_\_\_\_.

These examples establish the general idea of first defining the realistic limits and then offering simple check-off or yes-or-no choices.

## 2. LOCAL OPINION SURVEYS

Having framed the questions, of whom should they be asked? no one technique is best for all towns: some are fairly homogenous in outlook and others are split; still others give credence only to surveys conducted by computer and a few, perhaps, feel that their elected officials should do all the thinking. Below is a sampler of various techniques which may be used to solicit local opinion.

### a. Internal Reviews

In any event, the range of choices formulated by the study committee should first be exposed to comments from the town boards concerned and from the groups, especially the businessmen, whom the committee represents. In a few towns, this may be all the review that is really necessary to establish goals for the CBD/Town Center plan, especially if the town's general attitudes are already well known and town involvement in the plan is expected to be light.

### b. Public Meetings

In a small and homogenous place, a public meeting or a series of "coffees" may be enough to reach most of those outside the inner circle who wish to express an opinion.

### c. General Survey

By a "general survey" we mean a widely distributed questionnaire to which anyone interested enough can respond. Commonly this is mailed to all residents, if the budget permits, or else published as a leaflet in the local paper. Response tends to be better if the questionnaire is sponsored by a locally respected body, such as the Planning Board, the Board of

Selectmen, the League of Women Voters or the study committee itself, if its members are well known.

Since the level of response depends on individual activism, the results of this type of survey may not truly reflect the predominant weight of opinion. The responses do have a value in identifying the sources of support or antagonism and in suggesting considerations which may not have occurred to the study committee.

#### d. Sampling

Here the effort is to arrive at as accurate a statistical representation of town opinion as possible. Depending on the size of the place, a less than 10 percent sample is adequate, provided the selection process is random. A common technique is to take every  $n^{\text{th}}$  name on the street list. (It may be necessary to weight this somewhat to make sure that a representative number of those living in apartments is included.) Saturation coverage should be the aim, with the aid of personal interviews or with follow-up calls to those who fail to return the questionnaire.

#### e. Selective Survey

A survey directed at a selected group may be the single most useful survey in some cases, although it does not preclude use of the other types mentioned. This selected group might consist of the businessmen operating in the CBD, asking them in great detail about the particular marketing and development problems they face, their needs for space and parking and their views as to the assets and problems of the CBD. Or it could be a central neighborhood survey, seeking residents' opinions on neighborhood services, circulation, maintenance, nuisances, etc. as well as their relationships to the CBD. Towns with representative town meetings should probably poll all Town Meeting Members. Another possibility is to put together a list of respected citizens known to represent a cross-section of interests. As in the sampling technique, coverage of the selected group should be thorough.

### 3. SUMMARY OF GOALS

Whatever form of survey has been utilized, the responses and representative comments should be summarized and published for all to see. With this there should be a statement formulating the predominant goals. On questions where opinion is divided, the final reaction will have to await more tangible inputs, that is to say the appeal of the plan produced and the estimated costs and impacts involved in its realization.

### C. PRELIMINARY PLAN

The reconciliation of goals with the realities of place, money and time will be attempted in the Plan. Often a designer will begin with a Concept Plan which shows the circulation scheme and major blocks of land use in somewhat diagrammatic form. The Preliminary Plan goes a step further in specifying how these elements will actually fit the given site. At this point, the plan shows only the principal ideas; the detailed Development Plan, which



breaks the project down into currently manageable stages. can wait for the signal to go ahead. This signal will be the hoped-for outcome of public review of the concept together with its likely impacts.

## 1. ELEMENTS OF THE CONCEPT PLAN

Now, if not earlier, the services of a design professional will be needed. Depending on whether the most basic problem is organization of land use and circulation, overall visual organization, or the rehabilitation of buildings and improvement of their exteriors, a planner, landscape architect or architect will be the most obvious choice. These in turn may enlist other specialists as needed, for example a traffic engineer or a market analyst.

Each designer, of course, develops an individual approach, but in one form or another, the sequence of design studies will contain the elements listed below. They are illustrated in the appended case study of Millbury.

### a. Graphic Analysis of Problems and Opportunities

The basic problems to be overcome are implicit in the prior statement of goals. Site-specific problems, such as topography, circulation, inefficient use of land, can be highlighted in a sketch. So can the opportunities --the vacant lots, significant ownerships, salvageable buildings (especially historic ones), existing attractive features, and so on.

Certain elements of visual character, such as the location of noteworthy buildings or of buildings in marginal condition and the location of important landscape features can be mapped. Notes on elevations are best made in sketches or photographs.

Where the extension of utilities happens to pose a problem, this may be noted on the map, as may areas with foundation problems due to wetland, uncompacted fill or ledge.

### b. Circulation Scheme

There are a number of basic schemes for circulation and parking, one or another of which can be applied to the particular CBD. In Millbury's case, the natural solution is an interior parking court surrounded by buildings facing onto the surrounding streets. In other cases, the basic scheme may be a loose pattern of buildings interspersed with parking lots which are so interconnected as to permit off-street circulation between them. Sometimes topography will suggest a vertical overlap between parking and the buildings it serves; this is shown on one section of the Millbury conceptual scheme.

The major traffic movements to and through the central area will be shown along with any key devices to smooth its flow. The separation of pedestrian from vehicular traffic ought also to be considered at this stage. (See p. I-26, Fig. 6)

### c. Land Use

The major clumps of land use--business, low and high density residential, public and semi-public holdings--each need somewhat different treatment, yet their proximity can be mutually reinforcing. A generalized sketch of proposed land use will show how these can be inter-related.

### d. Concept Plan

This pulls together the major circulation and land use elements in a way designed to answer the questions raised in the Graphic Analysis. As a minimum, one may expect to see:

- the scheme for vehicular and pedestrian movements;
- location and size of proposed parking areas, including access and internal circulation;
- generalized blocks of land use;
- open space and landscaping;
- proposed location of significant new or rehabilitated buildings;
- any major grading or drainage proposals.

At this level of design, one should not expect details of construction, parking lay-outs, exterior treatment or streetscape improvements, for example. It is, however, sufficient to determine:

- where the major impacts are likely to occur;
- whether the basic concept is acceptable to the parties involved;
- who should share responsibility for carrying out the plan;
- what kinds of financial and technical assistance might be applicable.

## 2. PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS

It is important to have a feel for the relative weight of the various impacts of the Concept Plan. Here are some typical questions which must be answered in a general way before the Concept Plan will meet ready acceptance. That is why this subject precedes Section 3, Public Review, in this report. However, it is premature to look for precise answers at this stage; at least tentative public support should be assured before the Concept Plan is explored in great detail. Inclusion of a Preliminary Plan at this stage may also be desirable in order to assist the visualization of the proposals, but it should be understood that it is still subject to revision.

### a. Dislocations

How many families must be moved? How many properties taken? How many establishments become non-conforming if land use is changed?



## b. Costs

What land can only be secured by public taking and about how much will it cost? What other land may need to be acquired and must it be bought or might it be a gift or swap? What is the immediate loss in tax revenues from buildings to be razed as compared to possible tax gains?

How much pavement will have to be laid or widened at public expense? Who will prepare new parking areas and at roughly what cost?

Will the town have to extend or reconstruct utilities, for instance to improve water pressure for fire-fighting or to provide storm drainage? What is the general range of such costs?

On the other hand, there may be offsets. These will be discussed in more detail in Sections C and D, but even at this stage one can mention which proposed activities might be eligible for assistance.

## c. Social Impacts

Is room being created for a needed public facility or institution?

Are sites to be reserved for needed types of housing? Roughly how many units and in what price range?

Are existing houses or residential neighborhoods adversely affected by proposed development? Or will they be better protected than before?

Does the center promise to become a livelier and more interesting place? Or if increased activity is not the goal, will it become one with greater symbolic meaning to the town? Are interesting buildings to be preserved and restored to usefulness?

Have the needs of special age or income groups been considered? Are there appropriate indoor and outdoor meeting places or recreation areas for the elderly and the young? Has thought been given to the safety and comfort of pedestrians, bicyclists, bus-riders?

## d. Environmental Impacts

Will much grass be paved over or will other green spaces be added? Will fine trees be retained and new ones planted? Have flood plains been respected? Are natural streams and wetlands incorporated into the landscape design or buried? Has drainage from increased run-off from newly built-over areas been allowed for?

Have potentially handsome views been exploited? Or blocked? Are noteworthy buildings being saved?

Will there be a noticeable increase in the local levels of air or noise pollution? Will litter control be improved? Is there a plan to attack the visual pollution of cluttered signs, unkempt appearance, etc.?

### 3. PUBLIC REVIEW

At this point, the study committee will benefit from some feedback from its sponsors and in most cases from the surrounding neighborhood and the general public as well. The study committee needs to know whether it can go ahead with the Preliminary and Development Plans in the expectation of cooperation from the parties involved in its execution. If the Concept or Preliminary Plan is unacceptable, the reasons for resistance will become apparent during the review and a judgment can be made as to whether or not it is possible to modify the plan to overcome these objections.

In presenting the Concept or Preliminary Plan to the public, the logical order would be to:

- reiterate the goals;
- demonstrate how the Concept Plan approaches these goals;
- identify the major likely impacts--costs, dislocations, environmental;
- discuss and clarify policy questions raised by the Concept Plan.

Once the study committee knows that the Concept and Preliminary Plans are basically acceptable and who the beneficiaries and supporters are, it can set up the necessary organization to carry the plan further and to implement it when done. Suggestions will be given in the next two Sections.

## D. ORGANIZATION AND FUNDING

### 1. RESPONSIBILITIES

Representation by all parties affected is a sound principle to follow in organizing work on the CBD. Each party has certain powers and responsibilities.

#### a. Responsibilities, Recombined

The Town and its tax revenues and other funds are involved because:

- the CBD is part of the Town's tax base;
- in most cases, the Town owns property in the CBD;
- only the Town can change zoning and other bylaws and regulations affecting the CBD;
- the Town is responsible for enforcing building codes, regulations and bylaws;
- many chores in the CBD are normally town operations (rubbish collection, snow plowing, maintenance of streets and lights, etc.);



- it may be logical for the town to assume responsibility for managing and maintaining certain privately owned facilities, such as parking lots;
- it may occasionally be necessary to exercise the public's power of eminent domain to complete the assembly of a key parcel or to clear a cloudy title.

The property owners and their capital investments are involved because:

- the market value of their properties will be affected by changes to the CBD;
- they have the power to sell or give easements or land necessary to the plan;
- they are responsible for the improvement and maintenance of their buildings;
- it is up to them to make their varying needs and desires known and to work out a plan which will reconcile them.

The merchants and their operating budgets are involved because:

- their prosperity is at the mercy of the CBD's economic health;
- their day-to-day observations help to define the needed improvements;
- their cooperation is essential in management matters (employee parking, joint advertising, signs, litter control, etc.).

Thus we have a multiplicity of interested parties with diverse sources of funds: the Town, the owners (who in turn may be subdivided by the disparate interests of businessmen, institutions and residents of the area) and the merchants. This multiplicity is in great contrast to the simple dominance of the shopping center's owner. He alone manages and maintains the center and sets the standards to which all his tenants must conform. However, the owner of a shopping center is also limited in his freedom in that he must respond to his distant financial backers, whereas the component members of a CBD have the liberty and motivation to include community objectives and individual diversity in their equations. How can the components of the CBD organize in a way to match the control of the shopping center without losing responsiveness to individual and local needs? How can owners and businessmen combine to achieve the standing to deal with the Town as a responsible partner?

#### b. Duration of Effort

One of the greatest advantages of an on-going organization is that it can embark on a continuing program. Changes will not be completed overnight; the problems of the CBD accumulated over many years and will take many to resolve. Even urban renewal projects with all their powers took five years or more from conception to completion. Moreover, too drastic a pace of

change can drive out many of the businesses for whose benefit the change was intended. A program planned as a succession of several short phases can produce some highly visible result in each phase while more gradual transformations, such as streetscape improvements, or necessary but invisible installations, such as extension of utilities, progress a little each year. It is too much to expect even dedicated individuals to persist in such long-term effort; only an organization through which they and their successors can operate has the necessary staying power.

There are three basic forms of organization which can undertake the revitalization of the CBD. The first is the non-profit Development Corporation, the most suitable form when businessmen themselves are ready to take an active part in their own future. The second is the special Community Development Agency, wherein the Town undertakes to lead the way. The third, which may range in effectiveness from little more than a watching role to a subtly motivated interplay of public and private decisions, is the ad hoc coordination provided by civic leaders. This ad hoc form may be satisfactory when the changes called for are cosmetic rather than structural in nature.

## 2. THE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

A Development Corporation has the ability to focus the capital of the owners and the energies of the merchants on a long-term program for the revitalization of the CBD. Since it can back up its promises by action, the Corporation can enter into agreements with the Town whereby each party can be counted upon to perform its share of the task in a coordinated fashion.

### a. Organization

An active Board of Trade, Chamber of Commerce or similar body is a natural nucleus for the proposed Corporation. Lacking these, the Corporation may spin out of the original task force or study committee which banded together to restore the CBD. Or, as in Rutland, Vt., the initiative may be taken by a combination of local business leaders, which in that instance consisted of major owners, banks and newspapers.

The choice of executive director is critical, for it must be someone with the drive to keep the program moving and the persuasiveness to convey a sense of progress both to the Corporation's supporters and to the Town. There should also be someone available, whether in-house or through a consultant, who is able to track down the technical, financial and legal ramifications of the changes proposed.

### b. Possible Activities

Once in command of funds (about which more below), there are many things which a Development Corporation can do. To begin with, it can set up a staff or hire a consultant to work out the plans in detail. In this connection, Bennington, Vt., used a method worth consideration by other towns: it ran a design competition for the CBD plan under professional rules and chose its project designer among the three prize winners.



When it is time to begin implementing the plan, the Corporation can purchase and develop land needed for parking and access ways. It can buy, renovate and sell or lease buildings and help find new tenants. It can acquire easements over store fronts and pay to have them synchronized by means of decorative detailing, fresh signs, improved lighting for pedestrians, etc. More to the point, sometimes, it can use the same technique to create an inviting new face where stores back onto a parking lot. Yards can be decently fenced, internal walks can be laid (maybe even with a heating element to melt snow), benches, trees and lights can be provided.

Apart from its own construction projects, the Corporation can enter into negotiations with the town to assure that each party to the joint effort will do its share at the most propitious time. The Corporation's plans may call for coordinated provision of new public streets and utilities. Or the Corporation might furnish an assembled parcel on condition that the town will pave and operate it for parking, or that it will build a customer-pulling public facility, such as popular type of outdoor recreation area, or even just a kiosk for public rest rooms and information services.

Throughout, the Corporation should endeavor to bring its prestige to bear on its members so that each will do his part to see that his employees do not usurp short-term parking spaces, that litter is kept under control, that displays are freshened, and so on. In turn, members have a right to expect services from the Corporation. One such might be for publicity for the CBD as a whole, whether by advertisements or by the staging of special CBD events and seasonal decorations. Another is a search for new tenants or uses of vacant quarters which otherwise would look down-at-heel. A third service might consist of various aids to store management, say educational seminars such as those available through the Small Business Administration, advice on preparing forms and taxes, a typing pool, or an attempt to adapt big-store management techniques to a cooperative of small businesses.

The Corporation is also in a position to act as an effective advocate in discussions with other levels of government on matters affecting small businessmen. At the local level, the subjects might be assessments and zoning; land use and transportation policies at the regional level; and relevant legislative support from the state. These functions of internal management assistance and external advocacy can and should outlast the completion of the physical reconstruction projects which sparked the Corporation's existence.

### 3. THE SPECIAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

The state legislature has passed a number of special acts in response to local requests in order to permit communities such as Arlington, Medford, Newton, Peabody, Springfield and Wareham to set up consolidated town or city departments for planning, housing and redevelopment. This new "special animal" generally integrates housing and redevelopment authorities otherwise set up under Chapter 121-B of the General Laws and may include the functions of an Economic and Industrial Corporation as described in Chapter 121-C. Pertinent local boards and agencies can also be folded in, as a rule including the Planning Board and Building Inspector and perhaps the Engineering Department. The process has been described in detail in a case study for



Peabody by the Department of Community Affairs, Establishing Departments of Community.

This method of consolidation was improvised in order to gain two major advantages. The first is the ability to match the flexibility of funding afforded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Block Grants for Community Development<sup>1</sup> with an organization capable of exercising combined development powers, including eminent domain.<sup>2</sup> The second is that, unlike the old-style independent Authorities set up under Chapter 121, the local Community Development Agency is directly responsible to the community's chief executive. In view of these benefits, the Department of Community Affairs has submitted legislation to allow communities to undertake such reorganization without the necessity of seeking a special state act each time.

The director of the Community Development Agency may be either appointed by the municipal chief executive or by the board (often built on the Planning Board) which is to operate the Agency. As in the case of the Development Corporation, it is important to select a director with the capacity for sustained leadership. He must also have the ability to enlist the confidence and cooperation of the businessmen affected by the Agency's proposals for the CBD. Two important elements in establishing a "can-do" spirit are the clarity of zoning regulations and the realism of the proposed plans; the businessmen must know what to expect and what is expected of them.

A Community Development Agency is in an excellent position to plan and carry out a long-term project of the kind required to revitalize a CBD provided three conditions are met: (1) the Agency has a sound professional staff, which is not apt to be the case in the smaller towns; (2) the proposals for the CBD have won the general support of the business community--a condition more likely to obtain if it was involved in the plan's preparation; and (3) the town or city is able to make a major contribution to the CBD's improvement and thus energize most businessmen to do their share independently of the action or inaction of key property owners. In other words, a Community Development Agency may be the best arrangement when the changes needed are quite radical in nature, involving heavy public reconstruction and perhaps some clearance, or when the business community is too fragmented or financially weak to be able to take any major initiative.

#### 4. AD HOC COORDINATION

Cazenovia, N.Y., furnishes an interesting example of informal ad hoc coordination to improve a CBD. Cazenovia is a small, but rapidly growing suburb of an industrial town and has a noteworthy architectural heritage. The Cazenovia Preservation Foundation, Inc., grew out of citizen advisory committees to the local planning board on matters of architecture and its preservation. Its beginnings were modest--research, the purchase of a threatened architectural treasure, design consultations with interested

1. HUD block grants combine funds formerly allotted separately for redevelopment, housing, open space, utilities and numerous other special programs.
2. The power of eminent domain may remain vested directly in the voters, as in the case of Arlington where it is subject to Town Meeting vote.



owners of old store buildings. By now, the benefits include not only whole blocks of restored business frontage, but also re-use of restored buildings for a Town Hall and a Community Center, parks and pedestrian paths, all of which involved Town investments as well.

A letter from the Cazenovia Preservation Foundation's Chairman, Mrs. Riester, 11/18/75, explains the process: "One reason why we have been /so/ successful is that we have a diversified working board: the Town zoning officer and chairman of planning a Village board member, an attorney, an artist, a person from the local paper, a realtor, persons with landscape and architectural training. Usually we know what is going to happen in building...before it happens. This gives us the opportunity to aid and sometimes divert. Perhaps the greatest reason for the preservation of Cazenovia is the property owners themselves. The Foundation started the preservation on Main Street, the property owners saw the possibilities and went on to do an excellent job in restoring and preserving their properties. This is true also in the residential areas. .../All/ the money is raised through membership, donations and special fund raising events."

This essentially advisory role, supported only by donations of one kind or another, is not a complete substitute for an action agency's ability to promote structural change, but it was certainly effective in restoring the character--and the business vitality--of a CBD whose primary problem was its non-descript appearance. A variety of civic organizations, ranging from the Historical Society, the Board of Trade, or even a garden or bicycling club, may provide the initial impetus.

This approach to CBD improvement can work where improved appearance is the main consideration and where private owners, civic organizations and local government develop sensitivity towards the cues each one sends out and responds with the needed assistance.

## 5. FUNDING

Most of the discussion below is devoted to the funds available to the non-profit Development Corporation. A Community Development Agency of course has direct access through the municipality's chief executive to HUD block grants and all the other federal funds mentioned below except insofar as they are specifically designed for business applicants. An ad hoc association, on the other hand, is not directly eligible for the broad spectrum of public funds, although there are certain funds and foundations it may tap for historic preservation, for example, through a cooperating official body. In both cases, businessmen are left to their independent financial devices unless they also form a corporation of their own.

### a. Private Funding

A Development Corporation has more ways of collecting operating funds than are open to a loosely organized ad hoc association. Seed money to support the staff can be assessed on the Corporation's membership. Such assessments should be carefully calibrated according to ability to pay, since even the smallest business should be encouraged to contribute energy and cooperation, if not much cash.

The Corporation may also sell stock and undertake fund-raising drives, especially for items of public interest, such as an ornamental park, a tot-lot with a merry-go-round, or the purchase of an historic building.

Gifts of land or money may be solicited. One variant is to encourage owners to give easements over land needed for a project of mutual benefit to be carried out by the Corporation or the town. As mentioned earlier, this device was used in Rutland, Vt., to create a parking lot built and operated with public money. The advantages were that (a) the land cost nothing; (b) it remains in private ownership and can be taxed; (c) it was a relatively painless contribution by the participants; and (d) in return, the city assumed all construction and management costs and headaches.

Where revenue-producing projects are contemplated, such as the restoration of a vacant building to rentable condition, the Corporation can issue bonds or apply for commercial loans. Non-profit corporations can also get bank loans at reduced rates and redistribute the money to participating members, retaining a small surcharge for operating costs.

#### b. Publicly Assisted Funding

If the Corporation is organized along non-profit lines, it becomes eligible for low-cost, long-term loans and for grants from a variety of government bodies.

##### (1) Funds for Business Development

The Small Business Administration's Community Development Division has loans for which local development companies may apply. The "LDC" or Corporation must have at least 25 local resident or business members and the loan (not necessarily the Corporation) must be for a non-profit purpose. Basically, the loans are issued to enable individual businessmen to buy land, to renovate, expand or construct buildings and to buy equipment, but there are ways by which these loans may be funneled through the Corporation in order to achieve a project for mutual benefit, such as a pooled parking lot.

There are two types of "502" loans. In the first mortgage loan, 60 percent is borrowed at commercial bank rates, 30 percent is loaned by SBA at 6.625 percent for up to 25 years and 10 percent is contributed by the Corporation at whatever rate it chooses for a matching period. In guaranteed loans, 90 percent of the project cost is raised through a bank, but 9/10ths of that loan is guaranteed by the SBA for an interest rate not exceeding 10.75 percent; the remaining 10 percent is raised by the Corporation. There are some 40-odd such bodies currently receiving SBA loans in Massachusetts, mostly for industrial parks, but also for such diverse operations as private schools, medical offices and tennis clubs. "Pool" loans for inventory and equipment serving member businesses of the Corporation are also available.

A non-profit Corporation may apply for guaranteed 5 percent interest Business Development loans from the Farmers Home Administration (FmHA), provided it cannot get commercial loans at normal rates and provided, of course, that there is adequate security for repayment. The term can be extended to 40 years, or the life of the Corporation, whichever is less. The purposes



for which such a loan may be used are to establish or further business development, to increase employment and to control or abate pollution. For example, the loan may be used to finance construction, acquisition and modernization of buildings, to buy or develop land and to supply working capital. To qualify, it is best to be a rural area or town of less than 25,000 population and to have a project in mind which creates steady employment, although places with populations up to 50,000 may also apply.

FmHA also offers a program for Business Encouragement, which is similar in its purposes and eligibility requirements, but offers direct as well as insured or guaranteed loans. These do not apply to places which are part of a metropolitan area whose central city exceeds 50,000 in population. The local county office of FmHA can explain requirements in more detail and indicate whether their presently scarce funds have been supplemented.

## (2) Other Applicable Assistance

The Corporation can enter into agreement with the town to administer project and study grants from public sources. To take just one example, the Rutland, Vt., Downtown Development Corporation has shared in the City's revenue sharing grants and in grants from the Bicentennial Commission, the Federal Highway Administration, the Urban Mass Transit Commission and the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Block Grants. It has become, in short, a special-purpose development agency with its own trained staff (assisted by consultants as needed) capable of searching out and utilizing appropriate funds.

Other sources not utilized by Rutland might, as appropriate, also include the 701 Comprehensive Planning Program (under whose sponsorship this is being written),<sup>1</sup> the Governor's Highway Safety Program (for equipment related to traffic regulation), or the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation (50 percent of the cost of a downtown mini-park, provided this is part of a town-wide recreation plan). Rural towns, especially those smaller than 10,000 in population, which are considering public transportation improvements may find assistance in yet another of FmHA's programs, Transportation Systems for Rural Territory. This can issue loans to the town or to the Corporation applicable to the acquisition and construction of terminal areas and to the purchase and operation of vehicles. The Traffic Safety Act of 1973 included funds for pedestrian amenities.

CBD's which are so run-down as to qualify as blighted areas may apply to the state's Urban Renewal program for up to 75 percent of planning money and up to 50 percent of project costs. This program is so underfunded, however, that it can rarely be of substantial help. Furthermore, interest costs are excessively burdensome, since the town must borrow the lump sum at bank rates while the state is taking 20 years to reimburse the principal.

## (3) Related Town Funding

A town is independently eligible for all of the forms of publicly assisted funding listed above except SBA loans. The first sources of aid

---

1. currently more directed at state than local planning, however.

to focus on the CBD's improvement program, however, are its ordinary revenues for such normal municipal activities as street, sidewalk and parking improvements and utility extensions.

State law gives a town the power to create a Parking Authority which uses public parking meters to finance the acquisition, development, insurance and management of off-street parking areas or garages, provided the town has already installed parking meters along its streets and also provided that the proposed parking area is within 600 feet of the commercial buildings to be served. It may also, or instead, recoup the money spent on parking by 99-year leases of the airspace above a parking lot to a private developer. While such a Parking Authority is helpful in large cities where people are accustomed to paying for parking, it is not advisable for the small CBD which is competing with the free parking areas of the highway shopping malls.

FmHA also offers low-interest, long-term Community Facility Loans to towns of less than 10,000 population which are not eligible for reasonable loans from commercial or cooperative sources. Priorities go to towns under 5,500 in size and for projects such as water and sewerage improvements, but the program has also funded such projects as roads and bridges, police and fire stations, town halls and--of special interest to CBD's--pedestrian malls and parking facilities. The non-profit Corporation may also apply directly for this assistance if it is able to offer adequate security for repayment.

A last word of caution: funding programs are in constant flux as to total funds available for distribution and the rules whereby they are distributed and the interest is charged. But at least the listings above serve to indicate directions which a given Corporation or Town can most usefully explore.

## E. IMPLEMENTATION : SUMMARY

This section is largely a review of the preceding sections dealing with planning and organization. The one new element--and it is an important one--is the formulation of a phasing schedule for coordinated action by the Corporation and the Town, or by the Town's Community Development Agency. In the case of ad hoc coordination, organization will no doubt be improvised in accord with the capacity of the participants.

### 1. RECAPITULATION OF PRELIMINARY STEPS

#### a. Concept Plan

A task force or study committee is formed to analyze the CBD's problems and potentials and to sketch out a Concept Plan, leading to a Preliminary Plan, for its improvement. The committee may choose to hire a professional, or it may do the preliminary work itself with some technical help from the local town planner, if there is one, or, as in the case of Millbury, from the Department of Community Affairs, or conceivably from the regional planning agency.



The analysis should include the following elements described in Chapter II A and B: a simple market study; definition of the center's commercial, civic, residential and economic roles; identification of the center's physical problems and legal constraints; and formulation of tentative goals for the CBD's and center's future development. These goals should be tested by appropriate surveys and public review, although lack of time or money at this early stage may cause deferral of surveys to the next step in planning.

The Concept Plan itself (Chapter II C) should be a visualization of the general scheme of ultimate development. The Preliminary Plan can then be carried far enough to give indications of a sensible division of responsibilities between public and private parties and of the general magnitude of costs to each.

One point needs to be emphasized. The Preliminary Plan, although it presents the desired end result of proposed changes in a single image, does not imply these changes will take place simultaneously. Changes which can be initiated by the Town or by a development corporation will have to be scheduled according to capacity; changes depending on private initiative cannot be predicted, although they can be stimulated.

#### b. Organization and Working Funds

At this point, if not before, it is advisable to merge the various private interests into an action agency. Unless the intended treatment of the CBD is to be primarily cosmetic and unscheduled, the best vehicle is either a Development Corporation or a Community Development Agency, depending on the role the business community is able to play. In most small towns, we would expect a Development Corporation is more appropriate, given the low-key nature of government. This format enables the owners and merchants to act as a unit to plan, raise money and exchange commitments with the Town. The Town may also be represented ex officio, and/or the Town may transfer administration of publicly funded projects affecting the center to the Corporation. An energetic and respected executive director will be a key factor in the Corporation's success.

The staff will need working capital while it goes about the transformation of the Concept Plan into a Development Plan. The original sketch must be rounded out on the basis of more detailed information and cost estimates. If there is not already a consultant on board, the staff may either select one or choose one by means of a design competition. Alternatively, a limited amount of planning assistance may be available through the regional planning agency or the Department of Community Affairs.

The initial working funds will probably have to be raised locally by the Corporation itself through dues, drives and gifts. The Town can support

the effort directly by contributing staff time, or indirectly by conducting parallel studies for its share of the project. Once the plan is firm enough to be specific as to expected revenue-creating projects, the Corporation may sell stock, raise loans, or apply to the Small Business Administration, the Farmers Home Administration or to other federal sources for the loan of working capital relating to specified types of projects.

## 2. ACTION PLAN

An Action Plan is the combination of a Development Plan for physical development and an organizational plan for its implementation. Two points are stressed here once again: (1) the revitalization of the CBD will take time and (2) the Corporation and the Town should act as partners. Accordingly, an effective Action Plan should (1) set a realistic time frame (say 10-15 years) for the program of cumulative improvements, accompanied by a sequence of projects manageable within shorter schedules of say 1-3 years, and (2) clearly assign public or private responsibility for each undertaking, with an indication of the type of funding.

### a. Schedule

The next step is to synchronize the projects in a fashion whereby the Corporation and the Town match each other's efforts. Several considerations enter into these adjustments. One is the obvious measure of avoiding duplication of work of the kind where one side tears up a pavement the other has just laid. Another is that of concentrating on one area at a time: let the Town make over the street where the stores are renovating their exteriors. A third is the quid-pro-quo: if the Corporation performs a certain action, the Town promises to follow forthwith with another, such as paving the land for parking which the Corporation has assembled. A fourth inescapable consideration has to do with the availability of outside aid; one application may be funded while another fails. A fifth is psychological: if one party is engaged in an unglamorous task, such as the Town when it is laying utilities, or the Corporation when it is modernizing the interior of a building, schedule a task for the other party which will be visible enough to maintain the sense of progress. And in a related vein, if the start of the program can be electrified by a relatively cheap and visible project, such as the transformation of a vacant lot into a park and a matching paint and clean-up drive, so much the better.

The schedule should be accompanied by a budget, based on periodically revised estimated costs for the upcoming one-shot projects and regular annual allowances for cumulative projects such as public works and exterior renovations. The Corporation will then have an idea of how much money it needs to raise, and by which of the several methods mentioned. The Town does have some discretion in the allocation of funds for routine public works, but where an extra capital outlay is required, it must be voted. The chances for winning such votes are better when the Town has adopted a 5- or 6-year capital improvements program identifying the sequence and cost of the major items to come.



### b. Search for Outside Funds

Knowledge that certain projects are eligible for federal or state assistance of course has an impact both on the intended schedule and the scope of improvements undertaken. However, it is to be hoped that a schedule can be devised which will slow down rather than eliminate desired projects if assistance is not forthcoming.

Small towns tend to feel that they cannot compete with large cities for state and federal aid. This is not true: many programs are designed to favor small towns and rural communities. The programs of the Small Business and Farmers Home Administrations are cases in point. So is the structure of the Community Block Grants available through HUD. A substantial portion of these funds, whose total will increase each year up to 1980, is set aside for non-metropolitan communities. A choice is made between those communities who actually take the initiative to apply according to a formula weighted by population, low income and housing needs. These funds may be applied to a great variety of projects, including public and neighborhood facilities, renewal and code enforcement, housing and, be it noted, to the creation of community and neighborhood urban development organizations.

It is true, however, that small town, part-time administration is under a handicap in discovering and preparing applications for such funds. This is when they should look to the regional planning agency and to the state Department of Community Affairs for advice and help. The paid staff of the Corporation can be a helpful liaison between the town and the region or state in this process.

But in the meantime, let us not forget the obvious: many CBD projects can be accomplished entirely and most in large part by reliance on local resources, that is to say, civic and business support added to the Town's routine revenues. Denison, Texas, a town of 25,000, created a pedestrian mall and rehabilitated three business blocks at a combined public-private cost of \$163,000--a modest local investment considering a rise of 25 percent in the Mall's first year of sales in the face of competition from new shopping centers.

## 3. SUPPORTIVE ACTIONS

### a. Guidance of Private Efforts

Private efforts to restore and renovate business buildings, or historic buildings for uses appropriate to the center, can be coordinated in several ways. One is the approach used by the Cazenovia Preservation Foundation (Section D 4 above), which stands ready to assist owners on a case by case basis upon request. Another is to have an overall scheme or standard laid out in advance by a consultant, as was done in the "Townscape Revitalization Guide" for Oyster Bay Hamlet, L.I., by Vision, Inc., supplemented by optional and free design consultations. The town itself may provide such a service, as Brookline, Lexington and Salem do by the medium of a Design Review Board which evaluates the conformance of the proposed alteration to the explicit standards for environmental design reviews contained in the town's zoning bylaw. If the Corporation feels a more radical effort is needed, either to

achieve quick results or to spread out the burden on owners according to their ability to pay, it may try to acquire skin-deep easements over store fronts and undertake the work with its own funds.

Other ways in which the Corporation can assist merchants in managing their properties and businesses were suggested in Section D 2 b above, namely standards for upkeep, joint publicity, help in finding tenants and pooled business, educational and management services.

#### b. Related Municipal Support

Traffic regulations, assessment policies and zoning are three areas where municipal cooperation may be essential to the revitalization of the CBD.

##### (1) Traffic Regulations

To speak of the simplest item first, one which can be handled by administrative decision, traffic and parking regulations may need to be revised to sort out different types of parking, to ease flow and to eliminate unsafe turns. Serious reconsideration should be given to the elimination of parking meters where these exist.

##### (2) Assessments

Although there is no provision in state law, other than in renewal areas under Chapter 121-A, whereby a town can make a deal with a development corporation to defer the raising of assessments on properties which have been improved, there are in practice a number of ways by which the two parties can arrive at an informal understanding. For one thing, business property is frequently over-assessed already relative to other types of property. In such cases, the assessors may simply ignore the value added by improvements, since these merely serve to bring value more nearly in line with assessment. Assessors also have the option of choosing among three methods of valuation subject to approval by the state, namely market value, replacement value and value as income-producing property. By shifting to the income criterion for business properties, assessment need not be raised until it can be shown that greater income has in fact resulted from the improvement, or other cause. And finally, there is always that judgmental decision between classifying an improvement as part of normal maintenance or as a taxable new value added.

One conceivable way to avoid taxes for exterior improvements altogether would be if they are owned, skin-deep, by a body classified as tax-exempt under the Internal Revenue Service's rules in Section 501.C.3. This body would probably be more like a preservation foundation than like the typical development corporation which, even though it may be non-profit in purpose, does have assets which may ultimately be returned to its members.

##### (3) Zoning

The possible effects of zoning requirements for land use and development for business and possibly residence were discussed in some detail in Chapter I B 1 f and 3 c and in Section A 4 a above. The Town can take the initiative



in proposing zoning amendments in consultation with the Corporation. Section 9 of the newly amended Zoning Act, Chapter 40-A, contains three important changes which give a town and its planning board much greater flexibility to deal with CBD development if the town votes the necessary amendments.

One of these possibilities was already mentioned: that which allows the town to designate the Planning Board as the special permit granting authority in place of the Board of Appeals. This shift as concerns special permits in business districts would be appropriate where the Planning Board is collaborating with the Corporation to make over the CBD. Other classes of special permit could be handled by the Board of Appeals as heretofore.

The second change is the provision authorizing so-called incentive zoning, whereby a developer may be allowed certain limited benefits in return for specified benefits his development offers to the community. To quote the language of Section 9:

"/special permits may be allowed/ authorizing increases in the permissible density of population or intensity of a particular use in a proposed development /if the applicant provides/ certain open space, housing for persons of low or moderate income, traffic or pedestrian improvements, or other amenities. /Such bylaw/ shall state the specific improvements or amenities or locations of proposed uses ... and the maximum increases in density of population or intensity of use which may be authorized ..."

Assuming a lot of the necessary size can be assembled in the CBD, (and this lot may have buildings on it), its zoning as a planned unit development offers almost unlimited design flexibility. Here is the key sentence from Section 9:

"'Planned unit development' means a mixed use development on a plot of land containing a minimum of the lesser of sixty thousand square feet or five times the minimum lot size of the zoning district, but of such larger size as an ordinance or by-law may specify, in which a mixture of residential, open space, commercial, industrial or other uses and a variety of building types are determined to be sufficiently advantageous to render it appropriate to grant special permission to depart from the normal requirements of the district to the extent authorized by the ordinance or by-law."

The framing of amendments to permit incentive zoning or planned unit development will require competent technical advice.

### Chapter III

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STATE AND THE REGION

Chapter 807 of the Acts of 1975 was passed in the spirit of encouraging home rule by local involvement in the establishment of state and regional planning policies and to suggest possible legislation relating to growth policy matters. The suggestions below for assisting local communities in the revitalization of their CBD's are proffered in the same spirit of enabling towns to help themselves.

The Report of the Office of State Planning (OSP), "Towards a Growth Policy for Massachusetts" (Preliminary Draft, October, 1975) touched on several matters of relevance to the small CBD. The main thrust of the Report is the attempt to resolve the tension between conserving existing resources and providing stimuli to regeneration and growth. The basic recommendation of concentrating state help more on existing centers than has been the practice in the past is designed to utilize existing public investments more fully and at the same time to diminish pressures on the natural environment of outlying areas.

While the Report speaks primarily of the major population and economic centers, it does have some things to say regarding the small CBD. "The local technical assistance provided to municipalities by many state agencies should be geared to support planning and project development activities which will enhance the locational advantages of town and city centers through downtown revitalization, facade improvement, and mill re-use type activities." (p.68) The Report explicitly recognizes (p.151) that downtowns are a dynamic mix of uses, not merely retail centers. In line with this concept, it suggests that attention be given to re-adapting old commercial and industrial buildings, preferably for mixed residential/commercial uses or housing.

Another point of importance to small CBD's is the Report's criticism of strip development. "Strip development must be actively discouraged at the state and local levels. Those types of business traditionally found in strip locations--fast food operations, car dealerships, smaller retail outlets, etc.--should be encouraged to cluster in community-scale shopping centers and the like ... located to take maximum advantage of infrastructure capability ..." (p.70) This also has the advantage of making it possible to arrange point-to-point public transit to shopping areas. Specifically, the Report suggests that the state Department of Public Works should discourage highway curb cuts for strip development; give priority to road projects in towns which zone to discourage strip development along roads leading from highway exits; and, finally, assess extra costs of access improvements designed to serve new shopping centers onto the developers.

The additional suggestions which follow are intended to assist in the proposed policy of refocusing some state and regional energies on the



preservation of small CBD's. OSP might consider these along with others in the preparation of its projected position paper regarding downtown revitalization.

## A. POSSIBLE STATE ACTIONS

### 1. STATE URBAN RENEWAL (Chapter 121)

This report has noted the drawbacks of trying to apply state urban renewal procedures, underfunded and cumbersome as they are, to the problems of the small CBD. Furthermore, by no means all, or even the majority of the CBD's in need of revitalization come under Chapter 121's definition of blighted areas. State renewal funds would go much further if they can be used to prevent blight rather than to cure it. Also, a decision could be made to devote a certain proportion of these funds specifically to small-town centers, as against concentration on industrial parks or suburban areas. Finally, towns should be allowed to form consolidated Community Development Agencies

#### a. Provision of Seed-Money for CBD Planning

Small towns do not generally have the technical staff to help the local CBD task force or study committee perform the needed preliminary studies. An analysis and concept plan should usually precede the formation of an organization whereby money can be raised to proceed with planning and scheduling in greater depth. Seed-money from Chapter 121 might be used to support technical help for preliminary studies. Funds channeled through the Department of Community Affairs would be used to support studies of a generalized nature, whereas regional planning agencies would utilize the funds to provide assistance on the local and regional level.

#### (1) Department of Community Affairs

The Department of Community Affairs might extend the usefulness of its prototype study of CBD's by the following actions:

- pursuit of legislative changes designed to aid small CBD's;
- compilation of a periodically updated packet of information on state and federal assistance applicable to small CBD's;
- assistance in the filing of local applications for such funds;
- publicity about interesting local efforts to make over CBD/Town Centers;
- updating and refining of state-wide statistical information on the economic vitality of small CBD's, to act as a base line for local and regional comparisons.

#### (2) Regional Planning Agencies

The regional planning agency could use its share of the seed-money to expand its services to member communities in the following ways:

1. See discussion, page II-20

- provision of technical assistance in preliminary CBD/Town Center studies;
- periodic analysis and publication of retail and service business trends in the region, to show changes in the relative standings and functions of various shopping places and categories in the region.

#### b. State-Guaranteed Loans

The state might supplement the assistance available to development corporations under the Small Business Administration by guaranteeing reasonable interest rates on some portion of "502 first mortgage loans" which must still be borrowed without SBA assistance, or by further lowering interest on loans guaranteed by SBA. The state might stretch its assistance by limiting it to those portions of a project for which a commercial bank would find it difficult to assign a direct expected revenue, for example a general face-lift of the area, or the provision of free parking.

### 2. TAX LEGISLATION

Currently, the only state-sanctioned tax break for redevelopers in CBD's goes to those who are restoring an historic property within a renewal area covered by Chapter 121-A. The break consists of a possible 15-year, extendable exemption or tax reduction. This can be applied to any site, or to any building over 50 years old which has been shown to be of cultural, architectural, historic or archaeological value as determined by a complete local inventory certified by the state Historical Commission. It of course includes all buildings on the National Register. Obviously, this tax break, not large to begin with, has very limited applicability now that urban renewal is being phased out. If anything, the tax structure rewards demolition, not restoration, and there are attempts underway in Congress to remedy this fact.<sup>1</sup>

At the state level, it would be helpful if the tax break for restoration of significant sites and buildings could be extended to areas which are not subject to Chapter 121-A. Specifically, one might consider the following categories.

#### a. Planned Unit Developments in CBD's

The extension of the tax break principle for significant restorations from those located in renewal areas to those located in planned unit developments seems logical, since many of the same community objectives apply in both areas. As was suggested near the end of Chapter II above, some CBD's are eligible for treatment as planned unit developments and where these sites include significant buildings, their restoration should be rewarded.

#### b. Historic Districts

Historic Districts often include elements of a CBD. Suggesting a tax break for restorations in Historic Districts appears to be a contradiction on its face, since the historic district designation in itself tends to

---

1. The idea before Congress is to allow accelerated depreciation on restored historic buildings while denying depreciation when such buildings are demolished.



raise property values. It is common knowledge, however, that the long-established owners of such newly categorized buildings have no more ready cash than before with which to maintain their old structures. It is surely not the intent to force such owners to decide between neglect or sale. Perhaps, instead of taxing non-income-producing restorations, the added value might be recouped at the time of sale, in the manner used to defer taxes on agricultural land until it is sold for development. With such a break, owners of significant buildings in historic CBD districts might be encouraged to maintain them better while still continuing to occupy them.

#### c. Non-Profit Development Corporations in CBD's

Where such a corporation undertakes general exterior restorations with the intent of benefiting the CBD as a whole more than any particular owner, this might be treated as a public service at least to the extent of deferring taxes due.

#### d. Private Restoration of Store Fronts

Some towns, most specifically Brookline, have set design standards for the restoration of old store fronts by owners or tenants about to make some such change. (Existing fronts of course can continue as they are.) It is hard to know where to draw the line between costs of restoration the owner would normally undertake at his own expense and those alterations (sometimes actually less expensive) he must make in order to comply with the requirements of the local design review board. Perhaps the state should offer guidance to local assessors in drawing that line, so that the developer will not be taxed for alterations beyond those he might normally have made.

### 3. ZONING ACT (Chapter 40-A)

The new provisions of Section 9 of the Zoning Act, Chapter 40-A can be put to good use in CBD's, as was described in Chapter II E 3 above. Specific provisions aside, the truly significant thing about the revised Act is that, by omitting prescribed limitations on the purposes of zoning, it has left far more latitude for towns to devise zoning regulations under their home rule powers. Whatever the Constitution permits and the state has not prohibited, the town can do. The problem is going to be to determine whether zoning innovations are likely to pass constitutional tests. Ultimately the courts decide, but it would be most helpful if some state agency--the Department of Community Affairs? the Attorney General's Office?--could establish some guide lines in the form of model zoning amendments for towns to consider before they venture on zoning innovations. The ideas listed below are ones which might be useful for CBD's.

#### a. Extension of Site Review Powers

Under New Hampshire law regulating the subdivision of land (RSA 36:19-a), a town may grant its Planning Board power to review any site to be developed for any non-residential purpose. The intent is not to challenge the use as such, but to make sure that sensible criteria for site development are applied; it applies to uses permitted as of right as well as to special permits. It appears that the new Zoning Act would allow Massachusetts towns

to adopt a similar provision and to enlarge it to apply to multi-family sites as well. The utility of such site review powers in a CBD is obvious, and it would be helpful to know whether legal opinion supports the idea.

An alternative would be to include such a provision in the state's Subdivision Control Law, Chapter 41, which is currently under study in the legislature.

#### b. Contributions in Lieu

Current drafts revising the Subdivision Control Law include a provision whereby a subdivision developer may contribute cash for recreational land elsewhere in lieu of land in his development if the Planning Board agrees. Could not this idea be extended by analogy from parks to parking? Perhaps this is now permissible as an incentive of the kind allowed under Section 9 of the Zoning Act and could, if so, be demonstrated in a model amendment. It would be helpful where the owner of an undersized business lot cannot comply with on-site parking requirements but could contribute towards a joint parking lot for the CBD.

#### c. Transfer of Development Rights

Sunderland has adopted a system for transfer of development rights (TDR) to allow farmers to sell their unutilized package of buildings rights to developers in certain non-farm areas through the agency of the town. A similar idea might be appropriate in certain CBD's, whether it is designed to allow residence of greater density than normally permissible there in exchange for permanently diminished density elsewhere in town, or to allow more intensive development on one business lot in order to save another which contains an historic building or a site for a park. Again, a model amendment for towns to follow would be of help, since there are still unresolved questions about the mechanics of such transfers.

### B. POSSIBLE REGIONAL ACTIONS

Many of the possible regional approaches have been foreshadowed in the OSP Report, particularly as relates to technical assistance to localities, control over the location of future highway-oriented business and industry, the provision of public transit between settled areas and existing centers and the location of future housing so as to de-emphasize dependence on the car.

#### 1. REGIONAL RESPONSES

##### a. Technical Assistance

As suggested in Section A 1 a above, state urban renewal funds might be used to support technical assistance given specifically for small CBD projects. The region should also on its own undertake and maintain research to identify those CBD's which have a good chance of survival and proffer its technical services to them.



## b. Review of Proposals Affecting CBD's

Under the new Zoning Act, towns must report all proposed zoning amendments and all applications for special permits and variances to the regional planning agency, among others. The regional agency also has the right to appeal local decisions, although admittedly special permits are rarely overturned, and amendments not often. Thus the region has an opportunity to register its opinion at relevant local hearings and, therefore, an implied obligation to develop a considered position on the location of future shopping center and housing, among other matters. This position should carefully consider the effects of such proposals on existing CBD's.

The region's role is essentially advisory here. It is further limited by the lack of a comparable provision calling building permits to its attention, for there will be many significant proposals which are permitted as a matter of right and do not involve notification of the region.

## 2. REGIONAL INITIATIVES

### a. Expansion of Review Coverage

The preceding paragraph pointed out that only certain classes of project come to the regional planning office's attention. Maine law, by contrast, defines proposals of so-called regional significance by a certain minimum area of lot or building, or certain class of environmental impact. A Letter of Review addressed to the state's Environmental Improvement Commission is required from the town, and the region must also review the proposal before Site Location Approval will be given. Massachusetts' OSP is evidently thinking along similar lines in its projected study of a simplified comprehensive project review and permit system which would consider both environmental impacts and economic benefits. In the interim, it would be helpful to at least have any potentials for regional impacts called to the region's attention. Such a start might be made informally by having the region ask all its member towns to cooperate in notifying it of any application for a building permit or for a subdivision which exceeds certain limits of size or intensity.

### b. Coordination of Local Zoning for Highway Business

The new Zoning Act permits a regional planning agency to propose local zoning amendments. Presently it is impolitic for one town to decide to forego local taxes from a proposed shopping center in the hope of protecting its CBD when it knows the shopping center can settle just across the town line. A group of towns zoning in concert, as orchestrated by regional initiative, could in theory achieve a more rational control over the location of highway business. It will be difficult to get towns to agree to this approach, however, unless each participating town can be assured that it is not losing its share of potential tax revenue. The implication is that, unless highway development is to be excluded altogether, some formula must be devised at the state level which will apportion development costs and revenues between the towns in an equitable manner.

Even though the location of new highway shopping centers may be difficult to control, considerable progress might be made by adopting a sharper and uniform definition of what they may contain and how they should be developed. There are indeed certain mercantile activities which do belong on the highway, not in the CBD. If towns could agree on the uses to be permitted in highway shopping centers and could agree to narrow their locational choices by means of special permits containing certain locational and dimensional standards, the CBD's will have some measure of protection and the towns will be able to check extravagant extensions of roads and services. Such standards could be effectively worked out at the regional level.

### c. Supplementary Supporting Policies

It is not necessary here to elaborate on the fact that regional planning policies can be designed, and often are, to deliberately support rather than ignore existing small CBD's. A mention suffices.

#### (1) Transportation and Public Transit

Bypass highway improvements can be de-emphasized in order to divert more attention to downtown circulation and parking improvements. Efforts to provide public transit normally do and should continue to stress access from settled areas to existing centers of activity. One cannot say that highway business concentrations should not also be served, especially since the lower prices are attractive to the same people who need public transit, but certainly the CBD's should be served at least as well because of their additional non-retail functions.

#### (2) Publicly Assisted Housing

Preference is usually given to assisting housing projects within walking, or at least bus-riding, distance of a CBD. Such a policy is not only of benefit to the tenants, but also adds to the CBD's market. Where there is no vacant site nearby, however, serious consideration should be given to the remodeling of centrally located buildings in preference to new building on outlying sites. Regardless of programs for the building of new housing, there should be constant encouragement for the rehabilitation of centrally located buildings for residential use, whether subsidized or not.

### C. CONCLUSION

As has been remarked earlier in connection with private efforts to revitalize small CBD's, mistakes accumulated over a long time and will not be corrected overnight. The same is true of governmental efforts. But one need look back only twenty years to see vast changes. A striking example was given in the OSP Report: the state's growth between 1951 and 1971 consumed four times as much land per person as all previous growth combined. With respect to the changing role of CBD's, those who are of middle age can remember the opening of the first local supermarket and younger adults likewise remember the area's first regional mall. Some of the glamor is wearing thin. The community values and individuality which can best be expressed in



a small CBD/Town Center are on the rise. Perhaps, in another twenty years of effort, we can learn to accommodate each in its place: the efficiencies of the mass market and the home-town or neighborhood values of the small CBD.

## Chapter IV

### C A S E   S T U D Y :   M I L L B U R Y   C B D

#### A.   B A C K G R O U N D

##### 1.   C H O I C E   O F   M I L L B U R Y

The town of Millbury, Massachusetts, has been used here to illustrate the problem of the small town central business district. The methodology discussed in this report for approaching and tackling the problem is, in general, applicable to all small town business districts. However, in actual fact, each town is unique in its history, geography, socio-economic conditions, architectural and environmental quality, and the impact that modern developments in highways and expressways, suburban shopping centers, communication and distribution techniques, dispersion of population, industry and commerce have had on it. Millbury does not have all the problems that a small town CBD may be subject to, nor does it possess all the potentials. It is one community among many and this case study is designed to illustrate the application of the general methodology to a particular small town central business district.

##### 2.   F O R M A T I O N   O F   A   T A S K   F O R C E

A community which has decided to do something about its Central Business District must consider a number of factors that affect its growth and continued development. The important task of revitalizing the Central Business District cannot be left to the public agencies alone. They have an important role, but the real thrust and initiative must come from those who have the biggest stake in the Central Business District--the downtown property owners and merchants. In Millbury the first step was the formation of a task force to plan, guide, and implement any measures designed to improve the CBD. The task force is mostly comprised of the CBD property owners, merchants and bankers, one or two influential local citizens who are concerned with the development of the CBD in the context of the total community, and local officials as ex-officio members.

The task force has arranged to meet regularly once a month and has selected a chairman and a secretary to conduct the meetings and record the proceedings respectively. From the point of view of creating public interest in the community at large about the development of the CBD and the work of the task force, the minutes of the meetings should be published in the local newspapers, and members of the local press and local citizens should be welcomed and encouraged to attend the meetings of the task force. The input of interested citizens, or citizen groups, particularly from the residential neighborhoods in the immediate vicinity of the Central Business District, is vitally important to the work of the task force as many of these neighborhoods are likely to be affected by any measures proposed such as land use arrangement and zoning, traffic circulation, and provision of public facilities in the Central Business District. As the next step, we recommend that the task force should solicit the opinions of all those residing or doing business in the CBD. Active public participation is also an important



element in all state or federal programs designed for community development. Such state or federal programs may prove to be an important source of funds for some of the elements in the program for CBD revitalization.

### 3. CONSULTANT'S ROLE

At this stage the task force may engage a competent professional consultant. The consultant's role is to provide all necessary technical expertise of planning and programming related to the work of the task force. The consultant carries out relevant surveys and presents data on existing conditions and problems. He helps the task force to appreciate the inter-relationship of the various factors involved and prepares studies of alternative measures and strategies to deal with the problems. He helps the task force in the evaluation of alternatives and gives them an insight into the physical, political, and fiscal implications of these alternatives. He produces detailed plans based on the selected development strategy and prepares estimates of costs.

In Millbury, the Office of Local Assistance of the Massachusetts Department of Community Affairs has assumed the role of consultant in the preliminary steps in order to demonstrate how technical assistance can get the project started. Further detailed plans and cost estimates are to be prepared by the community's own consultant.

After these preliminary preparations, further steps in the development process are dealt with in the following sections. These involve close cooperation among the task force, the consultant and the community throughout the planning period.

### 4. BASIC DATA FOR MILLBURY

Millbury is situated in Worcester County. It is 43 miles from Boston and 6 miles from the city of Worcester. It is bordered by Worcester on the north, Grafton on the east, Sutton on the south, and Oxford and Auburn on the west.

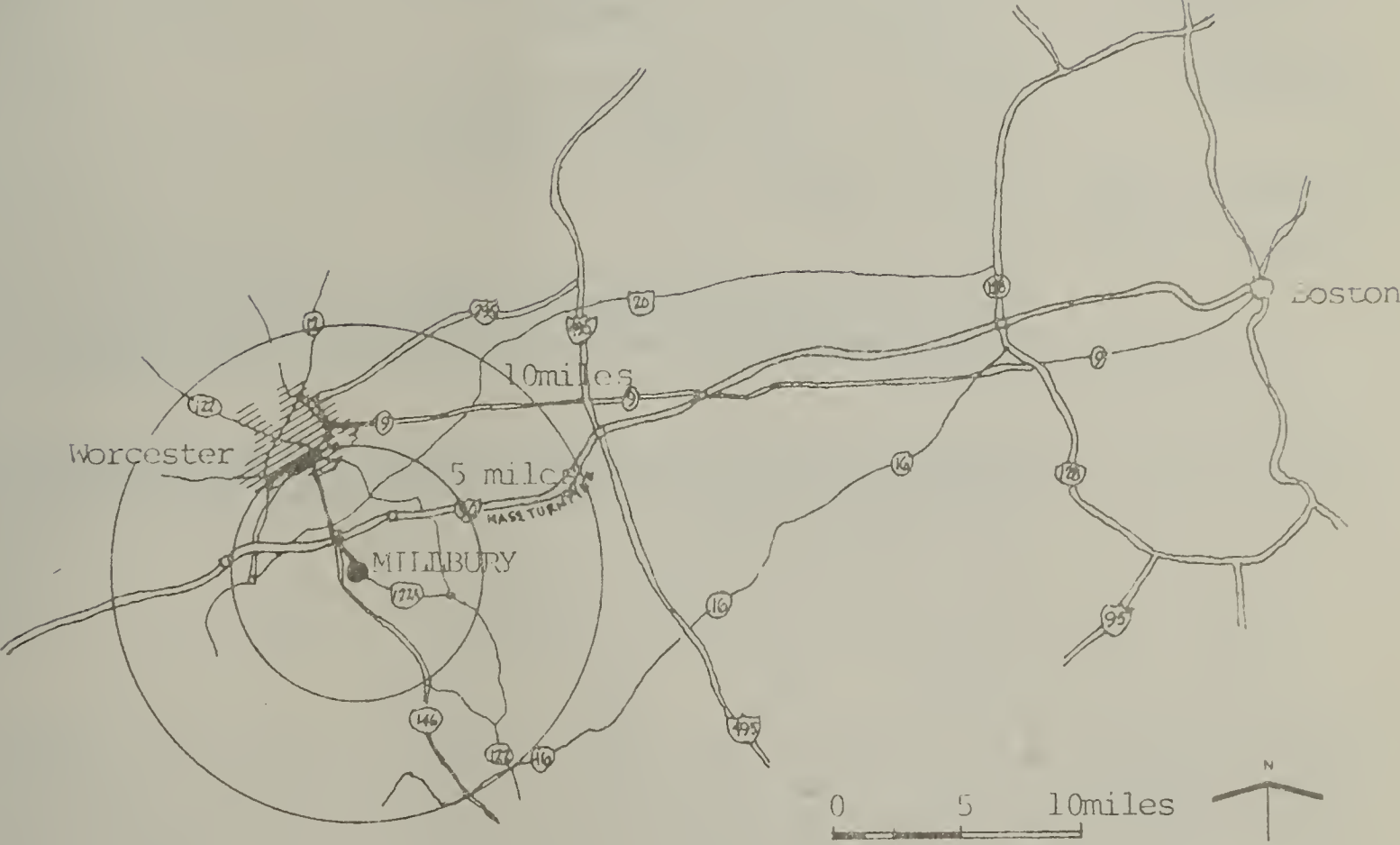
Major arteries which pass through Millbury include Route 146, the chief route to Providence; Route 122A which connects with Route 140, a major way to New Bedford and Cape Cod; Route 20, a connector for Route 9 to Boston and Route 15 to Connecticut and New York; and the most important of all, the Massachusetts Turnpike. An interchange for Millbury is located in East Millbury.

Millbury has a hilly topography, elevation ranging from 400 to about 800 feet above mean sea level. The Blackstone river winds through the community from northwest to southeast. Millbury has many lakes, ponds and streams.

General:                      Established in 1813.  
Industrial and residential community within the Worcester Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) and adjacent to the central city, Worcester.

FIG.16

TOWN OF MILLBURY, MASSACHUSETTS  
LOCATION MAP





Location: Approximately 43 miles west of Boston.  
The Massachusetts Turnpike, which runs through the town has been an important factor in the economic growth of Millbury.

Land Area: 15.84 square miles

Population: 1970 -- 11,987 (U.S. Census, 1970)  
1975 -- 13,000 (estimated)

Density: 1970 -- 757 persons per square mile  
1974 -- 808 persons per square mile

Median Income: \$9,731 (1970)

Economic Base: Manufacturing: 56 percent of employed population is employed in manufacturing (textile; primary metals, etc.)  
31 manufacturing firms; 1,146 employees, annual payroll \$9,436,000 in 1971.

Trade: 10 wholesale firms; 92 employees, annual payroll \$617,600 and 60 retail firm; 380 employees, annual payroll \$2,129,700 in 1971.

## B. MILLBURY'S POTENTIAL MARKET

It is possible to use the sales figures provided by the U.S. Census of Retail Business to get a general idea of the kind of business which might find a niche in Millbury. This knowledge will in turn influence plans for the development of the CBD--for example, should Millbury plan to accommodate a few, high-volume major stores with massive parking (probably outside the CBD), or a variety of small specialty shops? The answer in this case is obvious, even without documentation, because of the proximity of the Worcester CBD and the Auburn Mall, plus several smaller highway shopping centers at the edges of Millbury. Examination of the details of retail sales given below is useful, however, in furnishing additional clues as to the type of store likely to do well in the Millbury CBD. We caution that this refers only to the general category of store; the entrepreneur proposing to locate here will still need to make his own market survey to determine with what, exactly, his establishment will compete and whether the total market population and incomes are sufficient to support his particular enterprise. Each type of store has its own characteristic volume of sales per square foot needed to make it pay; this level of detail is beyond the scope of the study.

### 1. MILLBURY'S MARKET AREA

The Millbury CBD is within 5 miles of, and could attract population from, the following areas for retail items not found closer by.

Table 6.

Millbury's Estimated Market Area

<u>Within 5 miles</u>	<u>1970 total population</u>	<u>Estimated market pop.</u>	<u>1969 median family income</u>
East half of Auburn	15,300	7,000	\$11,310
Most of Grafton	11,700	10,000	11,711
Most of Sutton	4,600	4,000	10,538
All of Millbury	<u>12,000</u>	<u>12,000</u>	10,765
Totals	43,600	33,000	

The Millbury CBD competes with these centers within 5 miles:

- Worcester CBD;
- Auburn Mall;
- Mart and other highway business in Grafton;
- Food City and Aubuchon hardware and others in northeast corner of town.

The table below compares per capita sales of items bought almost daily, when convenience of location is an important factor.

Table 7. "Daily Needs," Retail Sales per Capita, 1972,  
for Millbury Market Area\*

	<u>Food</u>	<u>Gas</u>	<u>Eat</u>	<u>Drug</u>
Auburn	564	189	266	91
Grafton	216	84	131	n.d. (not disclosed)
Millbury	298	76	99	n.d.
Worcester SMSA	558	144	209	64
Average A + G + M	378	123	174	n.d.
Average as % SMSA	68%	85%	83%	---

\* no retail data available for Sutton

## 2. TYPES OF RETAIL MILLBURY MIGHT ATTRACT

Food: Millbury seemed relatively weak in foods in 1972 even though Hodes Food City was in operation by then. Millbury had only 53 percent of SMSA per capita food sales and might attract buyers from Grafton, which was even weaker (39 percent) and from Sutton. Auburn itself was at the SMSA average. Rather than attempting to compete with highway food shopping centers, Millbury might draw customers for specialty foods, as Sutton does now for meats. Such stores might include a fresh fish outlet, ethnic specialties, party catering, baked goods (Millbury has a bakery).

Gas: Gas stations flourish at the expressway exits in Auburn and Worcester. Overall, the needs of the three towns are almost satisfied within their boundaries (85%). Since gas stations are not compatible within a cramped CBD, no more should be encouraged in Millbury Center.



Eating and Drinking: Despite its numerous fast-food places and bars, Millbury is far below average for the SMSA, at 47 percent. Auburn, with its highway travellers, has 127 percent. One sees possibilities in Millbury for leisurely dining at a place designed to attract local repeaters and visiting businessmen rather than off-the-road customers. If at some time it became available, the Greek revival house on West Elm Street would be well located as a restaurant, near to banks and institutions and quite easily found from the Providence Turnpike. There is room on the site for parking at the rear and for outdoor service on the deep front lawn. An attractive lunch and dinner place would improve the tone of the CBD and encourage shoppers to linger.

Drugs: Lack of data prevents statistical evaluation, but the two existing drugstores are probably enough. This is a relatively constant demand, except near medical centers.

There are other types of retail in addition to the "daily needs" categories described above. Millbury's standing is given below, insofar as disclosed by the Census of Retail Trade.

Table 8. Other Retail Sales per Capita, 1972,  
for Millbury Market Area

	<u>Building</u> <u>Materials</u>	<u>General</u> <u>Merch.</u>	<u>Autos*</u>	<u>Apparel</u>	<u>Furniture</u>	<u>Misc.</u>
Auburn	399	n.d.		358	92	635
Grafton	219	n.d.		15	74	179
Millbury	76	n.d.		n.d.	15	142
Worcester SMSA	118	386		146	125	318

\* Auto dealers omitted as not relevant to CBD's

Building Materials, etc: By and large, these are not relevant to CBD's with one important exception, the hardware store. The burned-out hardware store in Millbury may be replaced and would be an asset, although its stock may be limited in view of the big Aubuchon outlet in northeast Millbury.

General Merchandise: This category is most at home in big shopping malls and cities, but a local variety store is often welcome--does Millbury have one?

Apparel and Accessories: While the data for Millbury is not disclosed, it is worth noting that one apparel store here specializes in clothes for a certain age and style bracket. This might be a model for other local ventures, such as stores for children's clothes, bridal shops or costume accessories, which carry items not found in the common-denominator stores of the large malls.

Furniture and Furnishings: The wide variety of choice demanded by the home decorator will lead her into Worcester for major items, but there might be a local market (especially since even Auburn is below average in this category) for frequently replaced items such as lamps, drapes or linens.

Miscellaneous Retail: In this case, the combined sales of the three towns exceed the SMSA average sales per capita by 7 percent, due, of course, to Auburn's high standing. Any specialty store in Millbury would either have to depend on its convenience to the local market or upon finding a special niche, especially one appealing to that fifth of the market population with incomes of \$15,000 or more who are not likely to be entirely satisfied with the offerings of the Auburn Mall. Millbury sells only 45 percent of the per capita average of the SMSA at present, even though its incomes are average for the region. The Millbury CBD can probably play host successfully to a variety of "miscellaneous" stores, such as a florist, stationer, toy store, sporting goods, needlework and crafts. The importance of that \$15,000+ income market to Millbury is underscored by the table below; although Millbury had only 600 such families in 1969, its CBD is potentially a convenient place to shop for perhaps 1500 more.

Table 9. Families with Median Incomes of \$15,000 or more in 1969  
(U.S. Census)

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Prorated for Estimated Market Area</u>
Auburn	1,188	543
Grafton	790	675
Millbury	623	623
Sutton	<u>274</u>	<u>238</u>
Totals	2,875	2,079

### 3. SUMMARY: POTENTIAL FOR RETAIL GROWTH IN THE MILLBURY CBD

The preceding analysis suggested that Millbury should plan to encourage specialty stores within the categories of food, apparel, small furnishings and miscellaneous retail and to find a place for a good restaurant. Having established the kinds of enterprise likely to be successful in Millbury center, the next question is, how much floor space will be required?

As cautioned in the beginning, this overview is not a substitute for individual market studies, but some clues as to reasonable expectations may be found by examining the pattern of 46 Massachusetts towns in Millbury's size range as to the number of local retail businesses in operation in 1972 (50-100; Millbury had 73). This is a more realistic base line for Millbury than the state averages, which include major city CBD's.



Table 10.

Retail Sales per Capita in Selected Categories in Towns  
with 50-100 Establishments in 1972 (U.S. Census of Retail Trade)

	<u>Food</u>	<u>Apparel</u>	<u>Furniture Furnish.</u>	<u>Eat &amp; Drink</u>	<u>Misc. Retail</u>	<u>Total</u>
State, Ave. Sales/Cap.	\$511	\$141	\$120	\$216	\$343	\$1331
-----						
Out of 46 towns: <sup>1</sup>						
Number reported <sup>2</sup>	(32)	(17)	(28)	(43)	(40)	
Ave. sales/cap. by place (not pop.)	412	68	68	168	199	847
-----						
Millbury sales/cap.	298	*	15	99	142	554
Difference (46 towns)	114	*	53	69	57	293

\* omitted because Millbury figures not disclosed.

1. See Table 3 on p.I-5 for details

2. Top and bottom extremes have been excluded, so the number of towns given here is 2 less than the total reporting.

This difference of \$293 per capita multiplied by Millbury's population of close to 12,000 gives an indication of its lag behind sales in comparable small towns. It amounts to about \$3.5 million in these categories alone, contrasted with its total retail sales of \$6.7 million in 1972. This potential 50 percent increase does not even take future population growth into account. It is therefore probably conservative to estimate that a 50 percent increase in retail floor space could, with aggressive marketing, be quite easily absorbed. It is, in fact, more likely that the limits for the expansion of this particular CBD will be set by physical constraints than by its potential market.

A key phrase above--aggressive marketing--should not be overlooked. In order to appeal to those likely to patronize specialty shops, the Millbury CBD will itself have to become something special. And that is to a large degree the province of its physical design.

### C.     A S S E S S M E N T     O F     P R O B L E M S

#### A N D     P O T E N T I A L S

#### 1.   P H Y S I C A L   P R O B L E M S

Present problems are a result of a long historical process and have to do not only with local forces but also, and mainly, with forces that are operative in the state, the nation, and the world at large. It is therefore necessary to separate the results of forces operating locally and those that are usually beyond the direct control of the local community. We are chiefly concerned here with forces that are within Millbury's control or influence. The broad aspects of outside forces have been discussed in the introduction to this report and will only be touched upon here.

#### a. Sprawl of Residential Development

The great mobility conferred by the automobile together with the tremendous increase in automobile ownership in recent decades freed residential locations to a certain extent from the need to be physically near places of work or business. In the Millbury area, construction of expressways and highways such as Rtes. 146, 122A, 20 and I-90 extended the range of physical distance within which houses could be located with respect to jobs, shopping, and entertainment facilities. By greatly reducing the time required to go to larger regional shopping centers, such as the Worcester CBD and the Auburn Mall, the automobile sharply reduced the reliance of homeowners on local central business districts for most of their daily needs in shopping, entertainment, and business and personal services. The need to conserve fuel arising out of increased cost of gasoline and the increasing costs of essential services have created the need for a more compact pattern and higher densities of residential development.

Local land use policies and zoning can correct this situation somewhat, if not reverse the trend completely, by allowing a more compact development to take place within the service areas of the Central Business Districts. This will mean permitting higher density residential building types such as garden apartments and townhouses within a distance of a ten-to-twenty-minute walk or a short car ride from the CBD. Accordingly, we shall recommend certain zoning changes and suggest areas suitable for higher density residential development.

#### b. Highways and Highway-Related Commercial Development

Generally speaking, highways bypass major residential developments. They are usually located through the least developed parts of the community and are therefore at some distance from the Central Business Districts. However, highways may give rise to both residential and commercial developments along their lengths or at the major interchanges. Such commercial and residential developments take people and business away from the existing Central Business District and the older major concentration of population which it serves.

In Millbury, the bulk of residential development has taken place within one mile radius of Millbury Center. East Millbury is over two miles away from Millbury Center and is a part of the larger residential development straddling the boundaries of four communities, namely, Worcester, Shrewsbury, Grafton and Millbury. This development has its own convenience shopping areas (i.e., Hode's Food City, The Mart, etc.)

Any large residential and/or commercial development north of the Massachusetts Turnpike may adversely affect the Millbury Center business district.

#### c. Traffic Congestion and Parking

The most common problems of traffic congestion and parking can be summarized as follows:



- Inadequate and unattractive parking at inconvenient locations;
- Poor accessibility over routes marked by rail conflicts, angle parked cars backing into traffic, double parked cars, and trucks loading and unloading on the street;
- The main street used by through traffic with origins and destinations outside the community.

In Millbury, through traffic bypasses the Millbury center commercial area by using Rtes. 146 and 122A, and does not create a problem in the town center. The principal problems here are caused by the narrowness of Elm Street and the junction of North and South Main Streets and Elm Street. The existing on-street parking, both parallel and diagonal, adds to the conflicts and creates hazardous operating conditions.

#### d. Pedestrian Circulation

Most downtown areas were never consciously planned and do not cater adequately to the pedestrian shops. They fail to offer the safety, comfort, convenience, courtesy, and pleasant surroundings they deserve.

In Millbury, there is considerable pedestrian activity along North and South Main Streets and Elm Street and at their intersection. A bus stop is located at the northeast corner of the intersection. Loading and discharging of passengers occurs at curbside as there is no bus turnout. This creates frequent interruption of mainline flow and queuing because of inadequate pavement width. An alternative location has therefore to be found for the bus stop.

#### e. Unattractive, Unaesthetic Environment

Most downtown areas present an unattractive appearance due to:

- Poorly maintained streets, sidewalks, steps, and building entrances, including alleyways and rear entrances;
- Cluttered streets and sidewalks with a maze of poles, standards, trash containers, parking meters, signs, hydrants and overhead wires.

In Millbury Center, there is a general lack of aesthetic appeal, due to an absence of planters, trees (except on the common) and other landscape features. The junction area generally and the parking lot on the southeast corner present an untidy appearance.

South Main Street is in poor condition with dilapidated or ill-maintained structures, broken or non-existent sidewalks and messy surroundings. On East Elm Street, buildings on the south side are old and dilapidated and in a poor state of repair.

#### f. Lack of Sign Controls

Most downtown areas have ugly, garish, oversized signs, and there is an excessive number of them.



# MILLBURY CENTER

## Millbury, Massachusetts



### EXISTING

- Residential
- Commercial
- Institutional
- Industrial
- Recreation & Open Space
- Parking

### PROPOSED

- Residential-Commercial
- Commercial
- Recreation & Open Space
- Parking
- Landscaping
- Sidewalk Improvements
- Bus Stop
- Access or Linkage



The preparation of this document was financed in part through an urban planning grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, under the provisions of Section 701 of the Housing Act of 1954, as amended.





At the moment, Millbury Center does not have a serious problem with regard to signs. There are some ugly, free-standing and overhanging signs in important locations such as the Coca-Cola signs east of the junction of Elm and North Main Streets. The problem will become more acute with more intensive development in the business area. A sound sign control policy is, therefore, necessary to the development of an aesthetically pleasing environment in Millbury Center.

#### g. Lack of Total Design

Downtown areas usually fail to adhere to any total design concept tying buildings and open spaces together. They have generally incompatible land uses that interrupt and interfere with the core retailing function.

Millbury Center does not have a compact retail shopping area which should be the nucleus of any small town CBD. It is also necessary to provide adequate and easily accessible parking areas within walking distance of retail shopping and other CBD functions. Within such a general organizational framework, existing buildings of architectural merit or historic significance, existing natural features such as the river or the local topography, existing open spaces such as the common, have to be integrated with new features to give a unique and identifiable character to the whole center area. Such an overriding design concept gives legibility and articulation to the area. Land uses are functionally interrelated in a logical fashion so that a visitor has little difficulty in either locating the functions or getting to them with the minimum expenditure of energy.

## 2. DESIGN POTENTIALS

The depressing conditions that prevail in most Central Business Districts must not blind us to the existence of features of positive value to the area. It is, therefore, necessary to make a careful inventory of all features within the CBD or in its vicinity that offer opportunities for preserving and enhancing their value and using them in the total development scheme to increase the attractiveness of the business district.

Such features include public and private buildings, monuments, parks and open spaces, vistas and skyline, land forms and topography, squares and plazas, etc.

One must look for interesting relationships of buildings and open spaces, waterways and water bodies, and mature trees and other landscape features that can be capitalized in the development plan.

Consider the existing public rights-of-way to see whether they are wide enough to allow wide sidewalks for pedestrian shopping. Consider if a different traffic pattern would be possible and will eliminate conflicts with pedestrian shoppers. Identify possible sites to provide resting places, public telephones, drinking fountains and other such shopper conveniences. Consider if existing public buildings or churches are so situated that they can form attractive focal or terminal points for a landscaped vista.

Professional assistance may be required at the next stage of analysis in order to carry out detailed studies of present and future potential of



the CBD. Economic base studies, retail trade surveys, traffic and parking surveys, land use and building condition studies can be useful either individually or as a part of a comprehensive evaluation of the future of the business district. In Millbury, an important early step will be to survey the businesses and institutions in the CBD to determine their needs and prospects more specifically than has been possible in the limited time allotted to this study.

In Millbury Center, the public buildings are all located together on the west side. The new town administration building is located too far back to be seen from Elm Street. However, it can be made more accessible from the central part of the CBD by opening up a new access from School Street. The other public buildings are in good shape and have their own off-street parking areas.

An historic building on 1.4 acres of land adjoins the town administration building land. This property is presently owned by the Bishop of Worcester. The building is in very good condition internally and requires minor repairs on the exterior. The grounds are edged with mature trees. The town may consider acquisition of this property for town use, possibly as a volunteer service agency center or such other use or uses which may capitalize on the large floor area and excellent grounds.

Main entry to Millbury Center from the north is by way of North Main Street and its intersection with Elm Street is marked by a public common with mature trees and two fine churches. This intersection is geographically central to the whole Millbury Center area and has potential for becoming the central focus of the CBD. The vacant lot (now being used as a temporary parking lot) on the southeast corner of the intersection (once the site of Town Hall) is well located for use as a public plaza. A fine brick structure housing the Millbury Cooperative Bank occupies the southwest corner of the intersection, the public common the northwest corner, and the vacant lot (proposed plaza site) the southeast corner. The whole intersection area, therefore, has enough aesthetic potential to create pressures in the immediate vicinity for quality development. The proposed plaza will also open up possibilities for access to the river which is not otherwise visible.

There are about two acres of mostly vacant land located about 300 feet west of the common on the north side of Elm Street. This property (comprising lots 80, 81, 82 and 87 of sheet 53 of the Millbury Assessors' maps) is under single ownership and has accesses to Grover Street and North Main Street as well as to Elm Street. With cooperation from surrounding owners, the property is well suited for a compact retail shopping development or mini-mall with on-site parking. The development will not require a zoning change as almost all of it falls within the existing Business A district (Fig. 17).

The approach to the junction from the south via South Main Street also offers features that can be utilized in the development of the area. The dilapidated and apparently abandoned building at the junction of South Main Street and School Street should be demolished. This opening will then offer an opportunity for compatible development along the west side of South Main Street. The east side of this street gives access to the river and has

scope for mixed commercial and residential development exploiting the view of the river. The old brick building now used as a hotel can possibly be rehabilitated if structurally sound.

The local knowledge of the task force members and the objective, outside viewpoint of the professional should make it possible to develop realistic solutions to CBD problems and build upon CBD potential.

### 3. DESIGN OBJECTIVES

Having assessed the CBD's problems and potentials, the task force should set down specific design objectives to be achieved. These objectives are desirable characteristics that any CBD should have in order to fulfill its role in the community. Design objectives differ from broad community goals with regard to the CBD. Such broad goals are concerned with the kinds of activities and the proportion of the total CBD land or floor area that the community wants to allot to these activities. Design objectives mainly refer to the efficiency of the spatial arrangement of these activities and are useful in assessing the relative merits of alternative plans for the development of the CBD.

#### a. Accessibility

The CBD should have maximum accessibility both from within the community and from outside the community. Access to the area should be direct and free from congestion. Pedestrian access should be direct and safe from vehicular conflicts. The approach to the CBD should be well signed from all highways.

#### b. Compactness

The CBD should be compact, and the shopping activity should be concentrated to allow most shopping to be accomplished with minimum walking and only one car stop.

#### c. Variety

The CBD should provide a maximum variety of activities, such as retail shopping, personal and business services, governmental services, food and entertainments. It should provide opportunity for daily convenience shopping as well as specialty goods and seasonal items.

#### d. Safety and Comfort

Conflicts between pedestrian and vehicular traffic should be minimized. Sidewalks should be well constructed and maintained. Buildings should be in sound condition. Shelter from inclement weather conditions should be available. Parking areas, sidewalks and streets should be well lighted. Places for rest and relaxation should be provided.

#### e. Aesthetic Appearance

The CBD should be aesthetically pleasing and attractive. Signs should be adequate for their purpose, restrained, well designed and properly



located. The entire area should be suitably landscaped with grass areas, shrubs, bushes, trees, etc., and provided with well designed street furniture in convenient locations. The aesthetic appeal should not be a mere decoration but must arise from functional relationships of land uses and a unifying design concept.

f. Preservation of Historic and Cultural Heritage

The CBD must preserve buildings of historic, cultural and architectural value and enhance their appeal by consciously integrating them in the total design.

g. Primacy as Trading, Cultural and Civic Center of the Community

The CBD must create anew or recapture a position of primacy in the community with regard to trade, civic and cultural activities of the community.

4. DEVELOPING THE PLAN

Having assessed both problems and potentials of Millbury's Central Business District, the task force is in a position to devise a concept plan or plans which meet the objectives as set down in the previous chapter. No single alternative will fulfill all the objectives to the same degree, but the goal must be to fulfill all the objectives to the maximum extent possible.

The concept plan sets out to solve the problems and maximize the potential of the CBD. The solutions to the problems of the Central Business District generally fall into six categories. These are:

- (1) Community-wide land use and zoning policies;
- (2) Physical appearance of the CBD;
- (3) Land use and physical arrangement within the CBD;
- (4) Traffic circulation and parking;
- (5) Public utility services;
- (6) Customer relations and merchandising.

A comprehensive approach is required to deal with all the above categories of problems. The concept plan for the CBD must be carried forward to the stage where it becomes a development plan which spells out the costs involved and indicates sources and methods of financing. Such development plans are usually based on a time frame of 3 to 5 years. Financial allocations are determined for each year of the plan-period, and an orderly sequence of implementation work is planned. For instance, underground utilities must come before resurfacing roads or putting in new sidewalks.

D. THE CONCEPT PLAN :  
GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. RECOMMENDED ZONING

a. Service Area

A strong, vital and viable Central Business District requires a fairly compact residential development within its service area and a relatively higher density development in its immediate vicinity. The drawing power of a Central Business District basically depends on its location relative to other shopping areas and the variety and excellence of the goods and services that it can provide. The drawing power, therefore, determines the service area.

Studies of shopping habits have shown that people are prepared to travel relatively longer distances for the higher priced and less frequently used goods and services and relatively shorter distances for the lower priced and more frequently needed goods and services. For their daily shopping needs, therefore, people generally tend to go to the nearest shopping area where such needs are met.

A compact population development surrounding the CBD provides it with a steady market which depends on it for its daily necessities. Convenience shopping, therefore, forms the nucleus of a small town Central Business District, and to the extent that it satisfactorily caters to these needs, it tends to capture this type of trade from the population immediately surrounding it.

The small town should adjust its land use and zoning policies by adopting a compact residential development pattern and allowing relatively higher density residential buildings, such as townhouses and garden apartments near to the CBD.

b. Residential Development in Millbury

The Town of Millbury has three residential districts:

Residential Districts  
Suburban I  
Suburban II

c. The "Residential District"

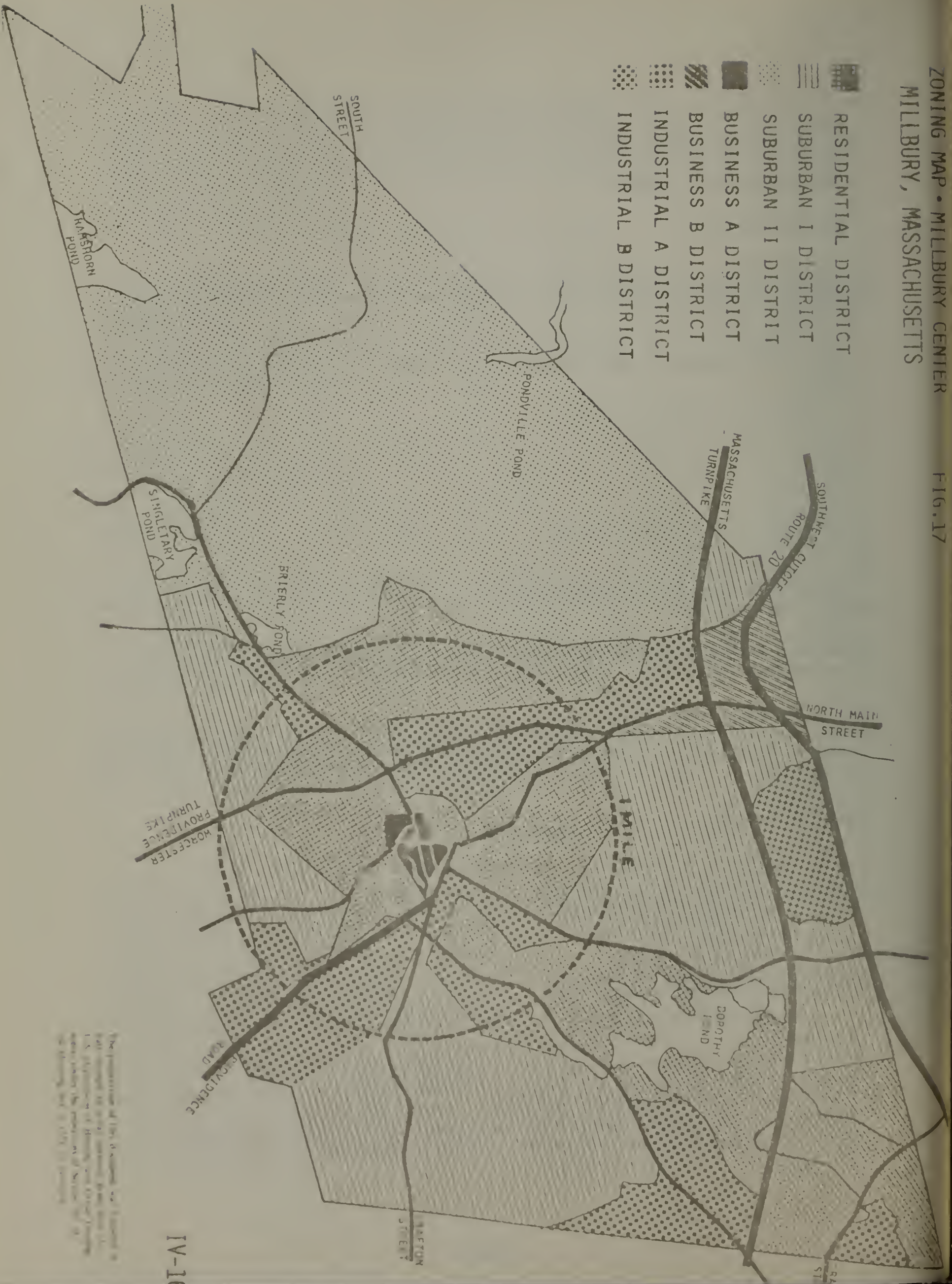
The "Residential District" allows by right one and two-family dwellings on minimum lots of 12,500 square feet and 18,750 square feet respectively. Multi-family dwellings are allowed by special permit. The minimum lot area for multi-story dwellings depends on the total number of units and bedrooms in excess of the two-family requirement. For example, a block of twelve apartment units of two bedrooms per apartment would require a minimum lot of 70,750 square feet or 1.62 acres, giving a density of 7.4 dwelling units per acre.



# ZONING MAP • MILLBURY CENTER MILLBURY, MASSACHUSETTS

FIG. 17

- RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT
- SUBURBAN I DISTRICT
- SUBURBAN II DISTRICT
- BUSINESS A DISTRICT
- BUSINESS B DISTRICT
- INDUSTRIAL A DISTRICT
- INDUSTRIAL B DISTRICT



The information on this map was prepared by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Economic Development, Office of Planning and Research, under the provisions of the National Housing Act of 1949, as amended.

d. Suburban I and Suburban II

In Suburban I districts one and two-family dwellings are allowed by right on minimum lots of 16,000 square feet and 24,000 square feet respectively. In Suburban II districts one and two-family dwellings are allowed on minimum lots of 40,000 square feet.

e. Multi-Family Dwellings

Multi-family dwellings are allowed by special permit in both Suburban I and Suburban II districts, with increased lot area requirements for additional dwelling units and additional bedrooms in excess of two-family requirement. For example, in Suburban I districts a block of twelve two-bedroom apartments would require a minimum lot area of 2.06 acres or a density of 5.8 dwelling units per acre. In Suburban II, the same block of apartments would need a minimum lot of 2.43 acres, i.e., a density of 4.9 dwelling units per acre.

f. Business Districts

Residential construction is also allowed in the Business A and Business B districts on minimum lots of 12,500 square feet and 18,750 square feet for one-family and two-family dwelling units, respectively. No special permit is required for multi-family dwellings in the business districts. A typical block of twelve apartments will require a minimum lot area of 1½ acres, i.e., a density of 8 D.U./acre.

g. Minimum Lot Area and Density Requirements

Table 11 summarizes existing minimum lot area and density requirements of different types of dwellings in Residential, Suburban I and Suburban II and Business districts of the Town of Millbury.

Table 11.

Millbury: Minimum Residential Lot Areas and Resulting Densities

DISTRICT	MINIMUM LOT AREA			DWELLING UNITS PER ACRE		
DISTRICT	1 Family	2 Family	Multi-Family 12 Apts.	1 Family	2 Family	Multi-Family 12 Apts.
Residential District	Sq.Ft. 12,500	Sq.Ft. 18,750	Acres 1.62	3.43	4.65	7.41
Suburban I	Sq.Ft. 16,000	Sq.Ft. 24,000	Acres 2.06	2.72	3.63	5.83
Suburban II	Sq.Ft. 40,000	Sq.Ft. 40,000	Acres 2.43	1.09	2.18	4.94
Business A & B	Sq.Ft. 12,500	Sq.Ft. 18,750	Acres 1.5	3.43	4.65	8.0



## h. Recommendations

In order to provide a more compact population within a mile of the Center business district, we recommend that a higher density be allowed for multi-family dwellings in the Residential District. Densities of 8 D.U./Acre for townhouses and 12 D.U./Acre for garden apartments (3 story height) are therefore recommended for this district. Multi-family dwellings should continue to require special permit as at present.

### i. Business A District

In the Business A district in Millbury Center, a still higher residential density should be permitted. On a minimum lot of 12,500 square feet, it should be possible to build six to eight apartments (mostly one-bedroom and some two-bedroom) giving a density of about twenty to twenty-five units to the acre. The density should be controlled by specifying a floor area ratio (i.e., the sum of total allowable floor area on all floors divided by the lot area) of about 1.00, and a maximum lot coverage of about 30 percent of the lot area. A minimum of 20-25 percent of landscaped area and on-site parking spaces at 1.5 spaces per apartment should be stipulated. This parking provision may be reduced in the case of housing for the elderly. Heights should be restricted to about 40 feet above the frontage level.

### j. Mixed Commercial/Residential

Within the Business A district, residential buildings with commercial use at the ground level and residential use on upper floors should be allowed by special permit. In such cases, heights greater than 45' may be considered with site approval procedure.

Table 12 summarizes recommended dwelling types and dimensional requirements in Residential, Suburban I, Suburban II and Business districts in Millbury. (See Page IV-19)

## 2. PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Attractive physical environment is crucial to upgrading and developing the Central Business District. It is necessary to bring the users into the business district and, once they are there, to make it a pleasurable experience for them. An attractive environment is therefore the setting against which all activities of the Central Business District--social, civic, commercial and recreational--are carried out. The main solutions to improving the physical appearance are the following.

### a. Clean-up, Repair and Painting

A lot can be accomplished by simply cleaning up the whole area, removing unsightly litter, building materials, boxes and cans that indicate years of neglect and apathy on the part of property owners within the business district.

Essential repairs and cleaning of all old structures should then be undertaken. Old and deteriorated brick-work should be repaired and re-pointed. Sandblasting, tuckpointing and sealing of the porous old brick is necessary. Window frames, cornices, fire escapes or other items may have to be repaired or replaced.

Table 12.

RECOMMENDED DWELLING TYPES AND DIMENSIONAL REQUIREMENTS

	<u>Min. Lot Area Sq.Ft.</u>	<u>Min. Frontage</u>	<u>Max. Lot Coverage</u>	<u>Max. Height</u>	<u>Min. Green Area</u>	<u>Min. Car Spaces</u>	<u>F.A.R.*</u>	<u>Net Density D.U./Acre</u>	<u>Site Plan Approval</u>
<u>Suburban II</u>									
One Fam.	40,000	150'	30%	30'	--	2/D.U.	--	1.09	--
Two Fam.	40,000	150'	30%	30'	--	2/D.U.	--	2.18	--
<u>Suburban I</u>									
One Fam.	16,000	125'	30%	30'	--	2/D.U.	--	2.72	--
Two Fam.	24,000	125'	30%	30'	--	2/D.U.	--	3.63	--
<u>Residential</u>									
One Fam.	12,500	100'	30%	30'	--	2/D.U.	--	3.43	--
Two Fam.	15,500	100'	30%	30'	--	2/D.U.	--	4.65	--
Town Ho.	40,000	--	25%	30'	30%	1.5/D.U.	--	8.00	yes
Gar. Apts.	40,000	--	25%	40'	30%	1.5/D.U.	--	12.00	yes
<u>Business A</u>									
<u>Business B</u>									
Gar. Apts.	12,500	100'	25%	40'	25%	1.5/D.U.	1.00	20 to 25	yes

\* 
$$\text{F.A.R.} = \frac{\text{total floor area}}{\text{lot area}}$$



## PRESERVABLE BUILDINGS: MILLBURY CENTER:



MILLBURY SAVINGS BANK



MILLBURY FEDERATED CHURCH PROPERTY



BARIBEAU BUILDING

## b. Rehabilitation of Structures of Historic or Architectural Value

It may be necessary to get professional advice from an architect or urban designer to suggest a scheme for rehabilitating building appearance in harmony with original architectural character. That character may be buried under layers of grime and successive remodelings or fragmented by ownerships, but it can often be rediscovered and restored. All unnecessary clutter, such as signs, panelling, etc., should be removed to reveal the basic appearance of the original building.

In Millbury the local historical society should prepare an inventory of buildings which should be preserved due to historical or architectural significance. In addition, every effort should be made to rehabilitate and adapt for reuse old buildings which are of solid, sound construction and which have been familiar landmarks in the area for many years. The mansion known as "Asa Waters Property" has already been mentioned as an historical building which should be acquired by the town for public use. Most of the brick structures in Millbury Center can be rehabilitated and reused. The Greek revival house next to the Elm Street fire station can be used as a professional building or a good quality restaurant as has been recommended previously (see IV B). The public school in Millbury Center can be easily converted to residential apartments should the school department declare it surplus anytime in the future.

## c. Landscape Planting and Street Furniture

The most neglected elements in business areas are street furniture and landscape plantings. These should be incorporated in the Central Business District in order to increase the attractiveness and convenience of the area to the pedestrian shopper. Among these are:

Benches	Bus Shelters
Planters	Screens and Fences
Drinking Fountains	Waste Bins
Phone Booths	Mail Boxes
Information Panels	Flag Poles
Sculpture	Fire Hydrants
Fountains	Trees and Bushes

Appearance, durability, maintenance, comfort and scale are major considerations in the selection and placement of street furniture. Professional advice is usually helpful in arriving at a plan suitable to the area's needs. Street furniture is manufactured in a wide variety of designs, materials and colors and may be custom designed to fit a particular situation. These may be installed along the sidewalk, at the curb or adjacent to the storefronts, in open spaces between buildings, or in parking areas.

The addition of trees, shrubs and attractively designed planters can make major additions to the visual quality of densely developed commercial areas. Proper landscaping can be a unifying element that acts to harmonize the varying, and often conflicting, building styles that generally exist in older commercial areas. In addition, it can be a softening, humanizing element in an otherwise severe environment. Trees and shrubs have functions





MILLBURY COOPERATIVE BANK BUILDING

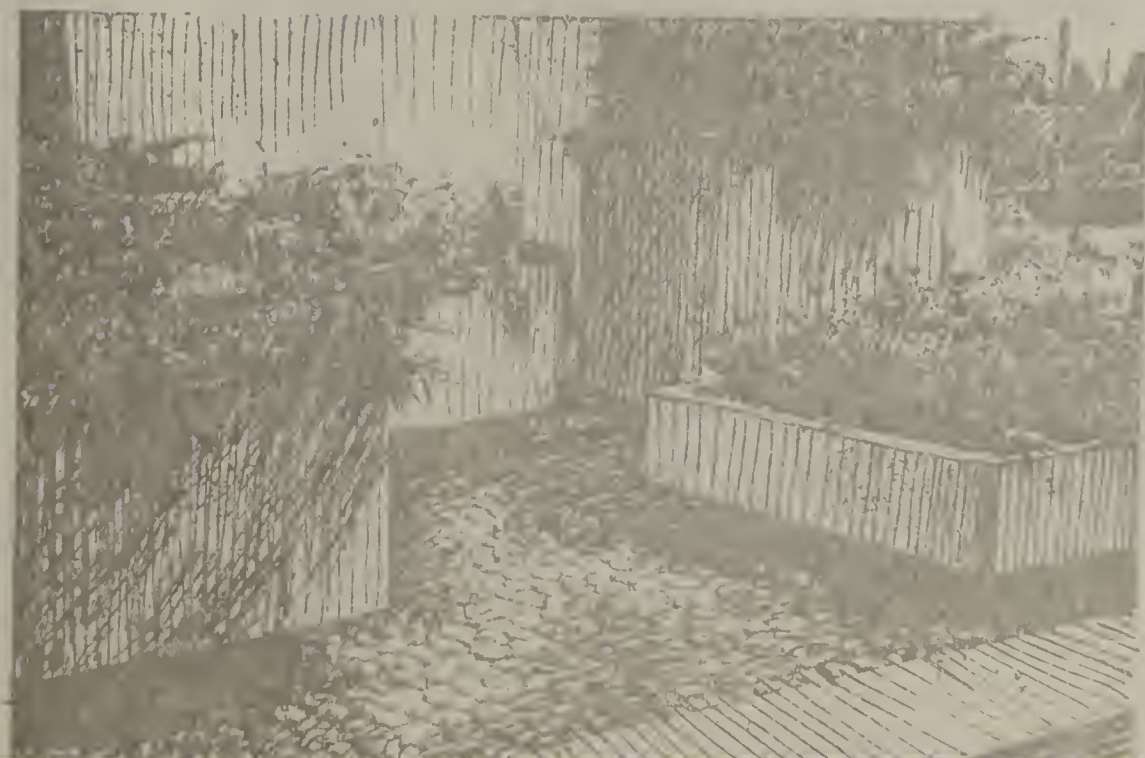
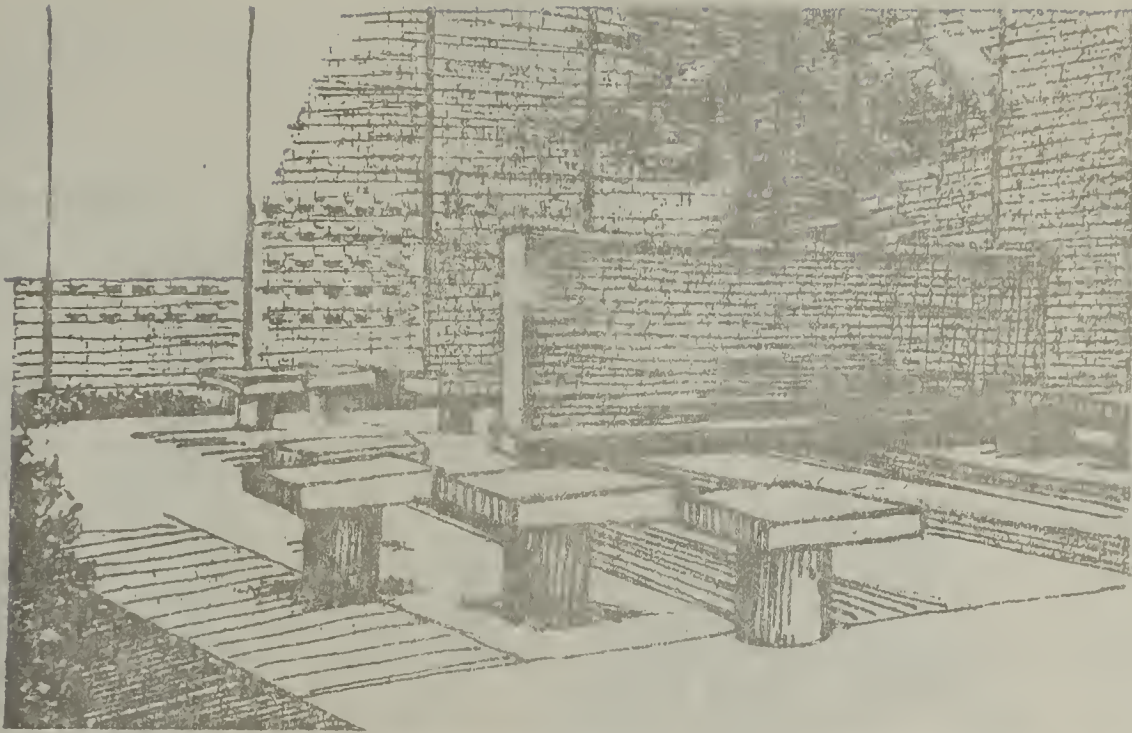


ASA WATERS MANSION



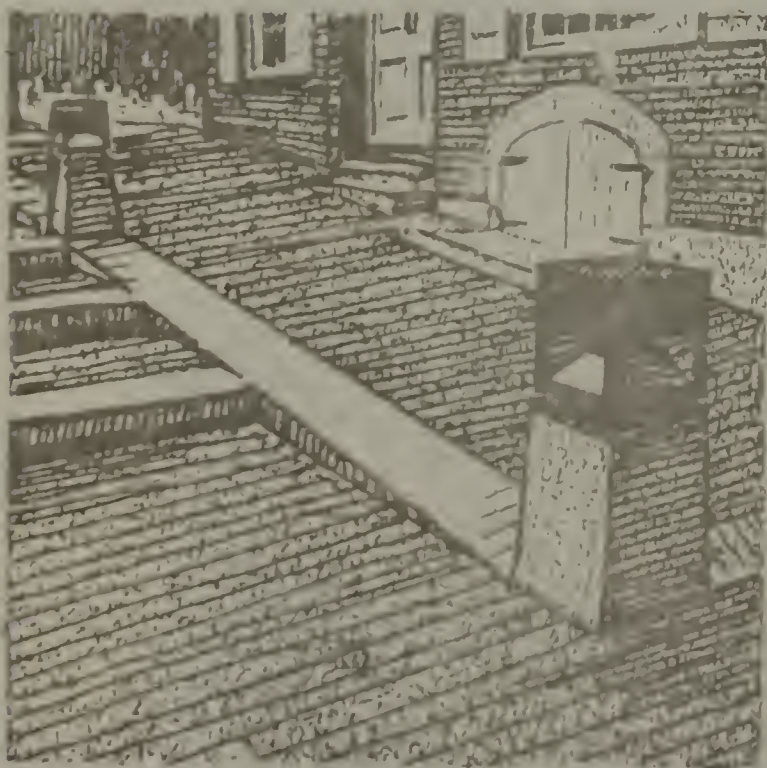
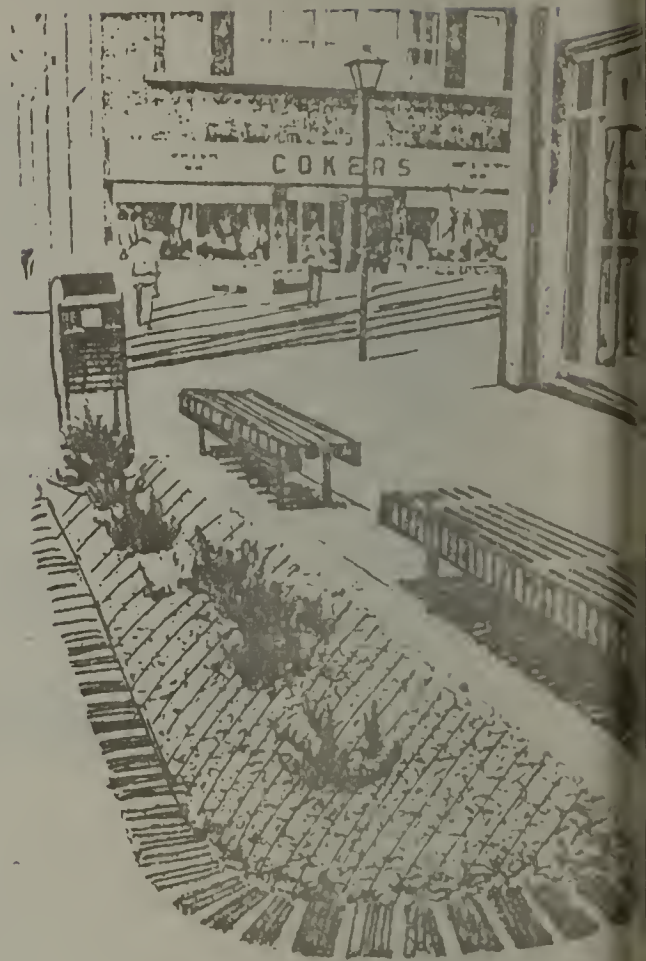
POST OFFICE







## EXAMPLES OF PLANTINGS AND STREET FURNITURE



as well as aesthetic attributes. They provide shade and shelter, act as noise buffers and visual screens, channel pedestrian traffic flow, serve as wind breakers, cool and purify the air and soften the glare of motor vehicle headlights.

Trees and shrubs may be planted in planting pockets built into the sidewalk or in concrete, wood or fibreglass planters arranged in groups along the street. They may be placed around the perimeter or in median strips and parking areas. Open spaces between buildings or at rear entrances adjacent to parking areas also offer opportunities for landscaping. Malls or mini-malls depend upon well-planned landscaping for their appeal and may include floral plantings, changed throughout the year for additional color and interest.

Variations in paving textures, materials and colors can relieve the dull gray monotony of plain concrete. Bricks, cobblestones, granite blocks, tiles, exposed aggregate and sandblasted concrete are just a few of the alternatives available.

#### d. Sign Control

Garish, oversized signs can destroy the visual effect of attractive storefronts, well-designed street furniture and tasteful landscaping. The following general rules should be followed.

Advertising and identification signs should be in scale with the building and mounted either on the wall or edge of a canopy as a fascia sign. Large signs that project over the sidewalk above the roof line or are mounted on the roof should be prohibited.

Letter styles, symbols, colors and material should have a high standard of graphic design and be in harmony with the architecture of the building on which they are placed.

Sign lighting should be internal or indirect, non-flashing and not be easily confused with or obscure traffic signals.

The number and size of signs should be regulated with a thorough understanding of the types of signs that are customary, necessary and available for use by public, semi-public and private property owners.

#### e. Sign Regulation By-Laws

Millbury may wish to adopt a comprehensive sign regulation by-law. Such a by-law requires the owner or lessee of the premises on which a sign is to be erected to file an application to the building inspector. The by-law lays down the permitted number, location, size and illumination of signs and regulates construction and maintenance.

#### f. Lighting

Adequate lighting is very important for every shopping area. Most often lighting efforts are directed toward getting maximum illumination on



FIG.20  
EXAMPLES OF SIGNS





the minimum cost to illuminate the street for the automobile. It is important to realize that there are different types of lighting for different situations and that a combination of these types will provide the best solution for the business area.

Street lighting, walkway lighting, area lighting and ornamental lighting all have their place in the CBD. Lighting should be carefully planned to provide the desired level of illumination with the least number of poles and fixtures which will be in scale with the buildings, the open spaces, and the people. The style and color of fixtures used should harmonize with the other design elements of the business area. Ideally, one should have the benefit of the light without being overly conscious of its source. Building-mounted and under-canopy mounted fixtures are two types that accomplish this objective very well. All wiring should be underground and transformers hidden from view. Poles and fixtures should complement the total design even during daylight hours when they are not in use.

Street lighting of commercial areas is usually brighter than necessary. The frequent practice is to mount mercury vapor or other high-intensity lamps on high poles and to place them at wide intervals. A lower intensity incandescent lamp is more suitable for in-town pedestrian areas. The incandescent bulb provides a more natural color range and can save energy if lowered wattages are used. The lamps should be mounted on closely-spaced, short poles. This method can provide a perfectly adequate light level. In addition to the uniform lighting pattern of pole-mounted fixtures, other areas of special lighting should be considered. Light fixtures can be mounted on buildings in entry ways and alleys. Shielded lamps that are integrated into benches and planters can provide emphasis in areas of pedestrian concentration. All light sources on the street, including those of commercial signs and shop windows should be included in determining the overall light level of the street. This diminishes the level of light to be supplied from street poles significantly without hampering visibility.

#### g. Removal of Overhead Utility Wires

More and more private property owners, cities, and utility companies are recognizing the aesthetic advantages of undergrounding public utility wires. Although undergrounding is expensive, and a successful program requires a deal of planning with much coordination among public and private sectors in the community, it presents the best way to remove the present visual clutter and provide a permanent solution to the problem. A requirement that all new utility installations within the area of the town center, within specific boundaries, be constructed underground is the crucial first step a community must take. This procedure will halt further construction of overhead systems (at the lowest ultimate cost to the community and to the utilities).

A program requiring undergrounding of all existing overhead facilities in the town center area is the next step in the process. This process is considerably more complicated and expensive than initial undergrounding, as a partial list of complicating factors shows. The interruption of utility service must be avoided; traffic stoppages must be avoided or minimized while streets, sidewalks, and curbs are broken up and finally replaced;



yards must be excavated; existing water and sewer lines may require relocation; and compensation must be arranged for any remaining amortization of replaced overhead equipment.

Since total undergrounding is very expensive, a community may settle for "opportunity" conversion. The opportunity conversion program will take advantage of situations as they arise when existing overhead installations must be altered, changed, or related. Most utilities will consider underground installation when existing facilities have to be changed in order to increase capacity, update obsolete equipment, or replace it when worn out. Such practical motives have accounted for more voluntary, industry-paid conversion than any other motives such as community desires or master plans. Such a program can ultimately lead to total conversion of the town center area, although only after a fairly long time.

Chapter 884 of the General Laws, "An Act relative to poles and overhead wires and associated overhead structures," regulates undergrounding operations by localities and utility companies and sets forth the procedures to be followed.

### 3. LAND USE AND PHYSICAL ARRANGEMENT WITHIN THE CBD.

In most small towns commercial activity tends to be linear and confined to one main street or two streets crossing each other. This junction of two streets is usually the central point from which the commercial activity radiates to a relatively short distance along the streets. Commercial lots usually have a narrow frontage and a relatively short depth of about a hundred feet. This depth is the result of the practice of most communities of zoning their commercial districts to a depth of 100 feet along the main streets.

Commercial frontages tend to be frequently interrupted by non-commercial uses such as town offices, post office, offices and banks. Very little off-street parking is provided and most parking takes place at the curb or directly in the front yards of commercial buildings, without any clear separation of public right-of-way and private property. Cars back right up to the sidewalk without any green strip of planting buffer. Due to the narrow frontages, curb cuts abound and constantly interrupt pedestrian movement on the sidewalk. The only access to commercial establishments is from the main street. Curb-parked cars and left turning movements disrupt the flow of traffic on the main street and create congestion and chaos.

Commercial lots back on to non-commercial uses and there is usually no room to provide off-street parking at the back. It is impossible to consolidate parking requirements of adjoining commercial establishments, or to create any kind of rational pattern for the best and most efficient use of available vacant spaces. This sort of spotty commercial activity along the main streets makes one-stop shopping impossible, and people are forced to park many times at the curb in order to accomplish all their shopping needs.

#### a. Zoning of Commercial Areas

In order to overcome most of the problems stated above, it is necessary to zone whole blocks to business use, rather than only short depths along

the principal streets. Such zoning makes it possible to provide consolidated parking areas at the back of commercial buildings with access from at least two streets. If these consolidated parking areas are also interconnected, a great deal of flexibility is built into the parking system catering to the needs of different activities which peak at different times. Servicing the commercial establishments becomes easier from these rear parking areas than from the main street, and no disruption of traffic flows on Main Street is involved.

Millbury is fortunate in having a potential for creating such consolidated parking areas at the back of commercial uses, and this forms a basic element in the proposed plan.

#### b. Non-Commercial Uses in Commercial Districts

Zoning whole blocks for commercial use will ultimately remove small, isolated pockets of non-CBD uses, such as residential, industrial, wholesale, etc., from prime commercial locations within the CBD area. The CBD is not the best or the most suitable location for such uses anyway. Industrial uses are best located on cheaper land in industrially-zoned areas where they have more room for expansion and for the movement and storage of trucks and raw materials or finished products. Wholesale commerce also requires land and buildings for movement and storage of trucks and materials and is best located outside the CBD. Isolated residential uses should also move out of the CBD to predominantly residential areas where the environment is more suitable and facilities available for residential use.

Such conflicts presently exist in Millbury Center. The Concept Plan assumes that such non-conforming uses as the Millbury Engineering Company and residential uses near the intersection on Elm Street will, in time, be removed.

#### c. Minimum Lot Sizes and Yards

Lots in Millbury Center should have a minimum frontage of 100 feet and should be restricted to only one curb cut per hundred foot frontage. Front yard widths can be reduced with the provision of landscaping and prohibition of parking. Depths of lots should allow rear parking and may be a minimum of 125', giving a minimum lot size of 12,500 square feet (100' x 125'). Such regulations will allow pedestrians a clear view of storefront displays, unobstructed by parked cars, and will increase the aesthetic appearance of the area. Sideyard requirements may be waived where sufficient access is provided to consolidated parking areas in the rear and party walls are fire proof.

#### d. High Density Residential Uses in the CBD

Downtown shopping areas benefit from high density residential developments located on the fringe or, in suitable areas, within the CBD. Such high density housing caters to the elderly, single person and newly-married households for whom nearness to shopping, recreation and civic activities is essential. These population groups tend to use the downtown area for a greater range of activities than the more distant family and children-oriented households. The elderly population in particular benefits greatly



from the nearness to shopping, cultural and recreational, banking, legal and medical facilities that residence in the CBD area affords.

Since land values in the CBD are generally higher than in the rest of town, substantially higher densities have to be allowed in order to induce developers to invest in residential development in the CBD. In the small town Central Business Districts, heights of 3 to 4 stories may be allowed without affecting the character of the CBD.

In order to make such residential development more financially attractive to the developer, provisions allowing mixed-commercial and residential developments may be added to the use regulations. Such commercial uses as doctors' and lawyers' offices, real estate offices, hotels and, in some cases restaurants, may be compatible with residential use and may occupy the first and/or basement floors in a 3-4 story residential development. Off-street parking spaces according to prevailing standards for each separate use should be mandatory.

## E. SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. LAND USE AND ZONING

#### a. Existing Land Use and Zoning

Fig. 21 shows existing land uses in Millbury Center. The junction of North/South Main Street and Elm Street is the focal point, and commercial activity is concentrated in a radius of about 500 feet in four directions.

Governmental functions such as the town hall, public library, fire station, post office, and school are all located along the west side of Elm Street beyond the commercial activity. There is an area of mixed residential and commercial use on East Elm Street which mostly consists of old residential structures on long and narrow frontage lots with commercial uses occupying the whole or portions of some of them.

On North Main Street, commercial activity extends up to its junction with Canal Street. Two lots along the river, east of South Main Street, are in light industrial use. Some isolated residential uses remain among the commercial uses even within 500 feet of the junction of North/South Main Street and Elm Street. An important location adjoining the junction on the south/east side which was previously occupied by the old town hall has been used as a free public parking lot since the town hall burned down a few years ago.

Fig. 21 shows the area of the Millbury Town Center that is zoned Business A. The Business A District allows residential construction on a minimum lot of 12,500 square feet in addition to business and other uses. Multi-family dwellings are allowed by special permit at the same density as that allowed by special permit in the Residential District.

#### b. Recommendations

It is not recommended that the Business A zoned area in the center be



FIG. 21



- 1 TOWN HALL
- 2 SCHOOL
- 3 FIRE STATION
- 4 PUBLIC LIBRARY
- 5 POST OFFICE

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS  
OFFICE OF LOCAL ASSISTANCE

Location of the town center as shown in the map is based on a plan of the town of Millbury, Massachusetts, dated 1894, and is subject to change as the town grows and the plan is amended.



expanded except that the zone should include the 100 foot wide strips along Grove and Water Streets now excluded from Business A District. It is recommended that the vacant, town-owned lot in the center, now being used as a free, public parking lot, be kept in open use and made into a plaza.

The industrial use now located along the river, east of South Main Street, should ultimately be relocated in an industrial area of the town outside Millbury Center. The land so released can be better used for commercial or mixed commercial and residential use. Such development should take advantage of the existing slope of the land to allow underground parking and terrace above to exploit the view of the river. Imaginative design can create public access to this terrace from the plaza, thus bringing a natural feature of the area into the total scheme for the town center.

It is recommended that multi-family housing at a higher density than is now possible be allowed by special permit in the Business A District. Lots should have a minimum area of 12,500 square feet. Density should be controlled by a maximum floor area ratio (F.A.R.) of 1.00 and a maximum lot coverage of 30 percent. Further requirements of off-street parking spaces (1.5 spaces per dwelling unit) and landscaped areas (minimum of 25 percent) should be included. Maximum height of 3½ stories or 40 feet above frontage road level should be stipulated.

It is recommended that mixed commercial and residential (multi-story) development be allowed by special permit within the Business A District at specific locations such as along the eastern side of Elm Street and in the area adjacent to and immediately south of the proposed plaza.

Presently vacant land in the block bounded by North Main Street, Grove Street, Water Street and Elm Street should be developed for a mini mall with adequate off-street parking. Access to the development would be available from Elm Street and Grove Street and if possible from North Main Street via a public right-of-way between the Common and Baptist Church. Most of this land is, at present, under single ownership (lots 80, 81, 82, and 37, Millbury Center).

## 2. TRAFFIC CIRCULATION AND PARKING

Traffic flow improvement and provision of adequate, conveniently located parking are important aspects of CBD revitalization. The following traffic characteristics generally need to be studied: average daily traffic volume, peak hours traffic volume, turning movement, origin and destination characteristics, service vehicle conflicts, accessibility conflicts, pedestrian/vehicle conflicts, and public transportation usage.

### a. Solutions Applicable to the Problems of CBD Traffic

Solutions applicable to the problems of Millbury Center traffic include:

- Utilization of one-way streets to carry traffic around the shopping core or to increase street capacity;
- Installation special left-turn or right-turn lanes and use of advance

signals for turns. This may eliminate some on-street parking near intersections;

- Enforcement of no-parking and double-parking restrictions;
- Elimination of left turns or all turns at some intersections;
- Improvement and coordination of traffic signal cycles based upon volumes and direction of flow. Better traffic markings and directional signing will also often help;
- Separation of automobile traffic and pedestrian traffic as much as possible;
- Encouragement of downtown deliveries to take place outside of peak shopping hours.
- Increasing the width (R.O.W.) of the principal shopping street, i.e., Elm Street, to 56 feet minimum (60' preferable).

Through traffic is not a serious problem in Millbury Center as state Routes 146 and 122A make it possible for through traffic to avoid the Center. The present average right-of-way of about 45 feet is inadequate. It is felt that a right-of-way of a minimum of 56 feet\* is needed to provide four traffic lanes (2 lanes of 10 feet width in each direction) and sidewalks of 8 feet width on either side.

#### b. Parking Improvements

Parking surveys, not yet made for Millbury Center, should evaluate location, number and condition of spaces and utilization, duration and turnover enforcement methods.

Parking improvements applicable to Millbury include the following:

- Develop shopper parking at the rear of stores and develop secondary entrances or mid-block arcades to connect with the main shopping street;
- Provide landscape plantings, shade trees, benches, and attractive lighting fixtures to make off-street parking areas more appealing;
- Keep the business district compact so that the customer can shop without having to move his car several times during each visit to the CBD;
- Vary time limit to encourage higher turnover rates near short-term shopping outlets and to channel all-day employee parking to specific locations not suited to customer parking. Intermediate limits of two or three hours should be provided for the long-term shopper;

---

\* Sixty feet right-of-way, allowing 4 lanes of 11 feet width and 8 feet wide sidewalks on either side, would be preferable, if feasible.



- Locate major shopping areas convenient to primary access points and CBD to minimize circulating traffic in search of parking areas;
- Design off-street parking areas so drivers can circulate smoothly throughout the lot without backtracking or re-entering the traffic stream;
- Keep aisles and stalls well marked and parking areas free of litter and debris;
- Stall widths should be nine feet minimum in order to allow shoppers to open doors and load packages (shopping centers often allow 10 feet);
- Make sure that on-street spaces allow adequate room for maneuvering without interfering with traffic movement;
- Provide bicycle parking stalls in parking areas.

#### c. TOPICS Traffic Recommendations for Millbury Center

An area-wide traffic study has been conducted for the Town of Millbury by a firm of traffic consultants under the Area-Wide TOPICS PLAN of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The town center improvement plan and program should be coordinated with the traffic improvement planned under the TOPICS plan.

#### d. Other Provisions

##### (1) Bus Routes and Stops:

Many non-drivers, such as the elderly, the young and others who do not drive or do not possess a car, need public transportation to the town center for shopping, recreation and other purposes. Bus stops should be near the retail shopping area so that parcels need not be carried far.

In Millbury, four bus routes (operated by two bus companies) go through the town center area. The bus stop presently located on the northeast side of the intersection should be relocated on North Main Street near the two churches. This location is not far from the present bus stop and will be in a good position with respect to the proposed mini shopping mall and to the shopping area in general. Another pair of bus stops is recommended opposite the post office on Elm Street.

##### (2) Bicycles and Bicycle Paths

The concept of bikepaths or bikeways is not new. People are discovering that bicycles can be an active, inexpensive, and pollution-free alternative to city traffic or crowded buses. The increase in riders is apparent despite the hazards of narrow streets, potholes, heavy exhaust fumes and frequent bicycle thefts. In small towns, distances are greater but there

is more open space and less traffic, as well as less frequent public transportation. Bicycles are a popular form of recreation and their use for local transportation is growing.

Millbury should plan bikeways throughout the community, joining residential areas with recreational open space, places of interest and shopping areas. This will considerably increase the patronage of the shopping center, particularly if proper facilities for travel and storage of bicycles are provided. As a beginning, sloped curbcuts should be provided at street intersections to facilitate changeover from the sidewalk to the street. (Handicapped persons will be even more grateful.) All parking areas should have separate parking areas for bicycles.





## F. THE DESIGN CONCEPT

After devising solutions to problems of land use and physical arrangements within the CBD, traffic and pedestrian circulation, parking and utility services, etc., the solutions have to be tied together into a total design concept for the CBD. A design concept may start off from a composite of a number of plans embodying the solutions to individual problems.

The total design concept, however, should go beyond a mere agglomeration of individual solutions by introducing elements that give the district a unique character befitting the town center. The total design concept may be based on topographical character (land forms, slopes, mounds, etc.); natural features (river, lake, pond, etc.); open spaces and parks (plaza, common, etc.); buildings of historical or architectural value (churches, old town hall, and other landmarks); or a combination of all these.

Following are the ways in which the separate land uses, buildings and functions of Millbury's town center area or CBD can be tied together into a total design concept.

### 1. CENTRAL FOCUS: THE TOWN PLAZA

A plaza, common, or a park can form a strong focus for the downtown area. Millbury is fortunate in possessing a common and a vacant lot at the intersection of Elm Street and North/South Main Street that is ideally suited for this purpose. Such a feature in the geographical center of the CBD can become the dominant focus of the whole scheme and give it a unity which it may otherwise lack. Traditionally, important civic or religious buildings, like town halls, churches, public libraries, and imposing residential or commercial structures front on the central plaza or common. In order to form a dominant feature, such a common or plaza must be in scale with the size of the downtown area and should be designed to encourage maximum public use by the provision of bandstands, fountains, sitting areas, meeting places, wading pools, outdoor skating rinks, and other such attractions.

The junction of North-South Main Street and Elm Street is the heart of Millbury Center and its commercial area. A small common with mature trees occupies the northwest corner of the junction. A town-owned vacant lot, presently used for free public parking sits at the southeast corner. A war memorial is located at the southwest corner.

The important position of this junction, which gives access to the CBD area from north, south, east and west, should be emphasized by creating a plaza on the town-owned vacant lot. The lot is roughly 185 feet by 110 feet and with the existing common, would form an attractive focal point for the business district. The two churches at the northern end of this junction add to the importance and strength of the focal point.

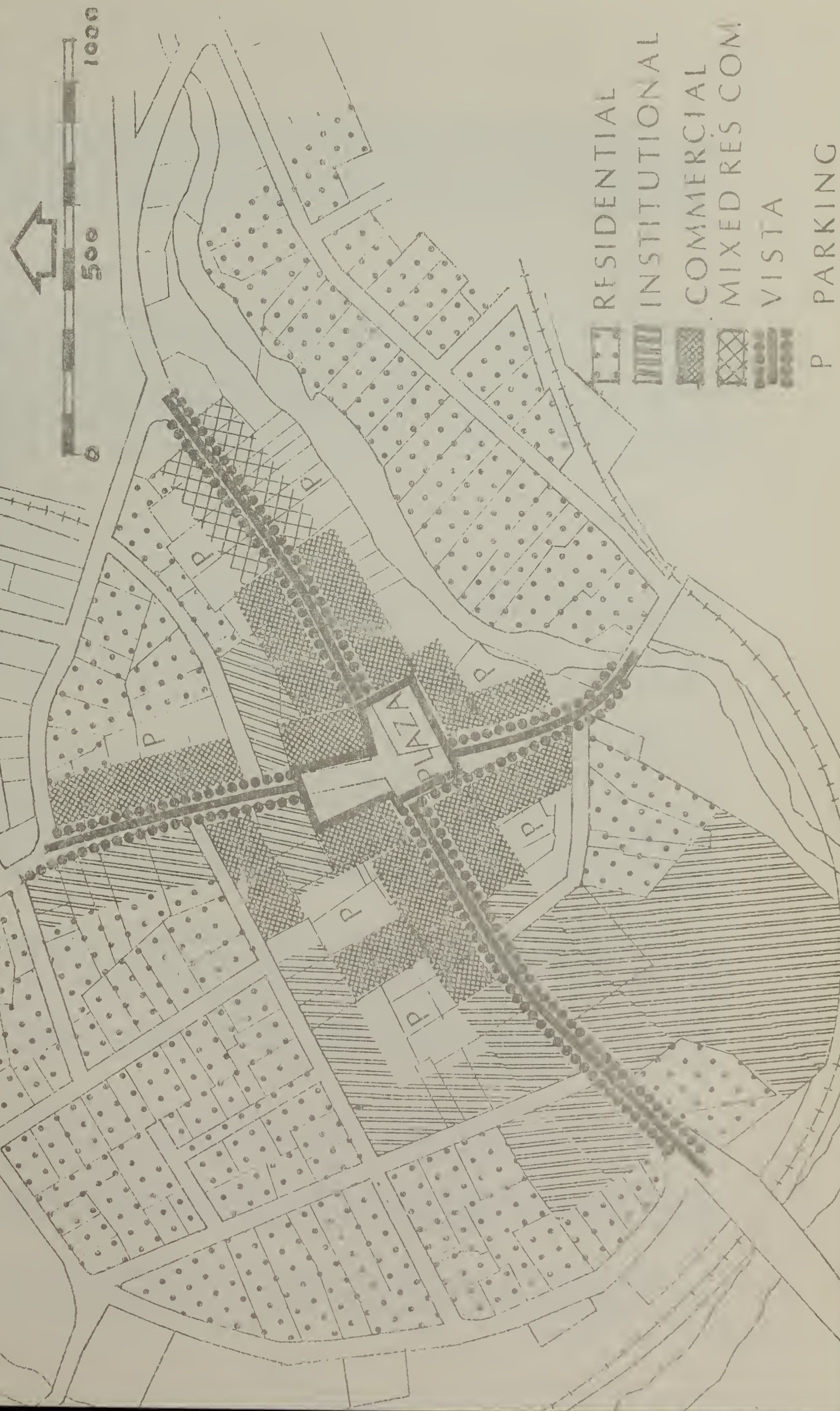
The town-owned vacant lot is not large enough to be used for commercial purposes, as there is not enough room for on-site customer parking. Used as a parking lot, it provides parking for only about 35 to 40 cars, and would not help the parking problem in any substantial way. Parking at this important location would detract from the potential aesthetic quality of this area.



FIG.22

IV-35

# MILLBURY CENTER DESIGN CONCEPT





The proposed plaza would provide a suitable location for the war memorial presently placed in a traffic island on the southwest corner. The area thus freed by the shifting of the war memorial can be used for widening the sidewalk at this corner and incorporating planters, benches and lighting in an attractive setting.

## 2. LAND USE AROUND THE PLAZA

The proposed plaza would encourage the redevelopment of the properties to the south of this lot, between the proposed plaza and the river. Part of the area is presently occupied by a light industry which, it has been recommended, should eventually find a more appropriate or cheaper location outside of the Millbury Center area. An imaginative development could combine commercial and residential uses and, taking advantage of the slope down to the river, provide a riverside terrace on top of underground or lower-level parking with direct access to the plaza above.

## 3. THE PLAZA AND THE RIVER

Natural features such as rivers or lake fronts, mill ponds, steep slopes, mounds, eskers, etc., often give a strong and unique character to an area and may determine or influence the total design concept. The plaza will open up views of the river which at present is completely hidden and unexploited. A direct public access to the proposed riverside open space can also be provided, and this natural feature can thus be used to enhance the attractiveness of the town center.

## 4. THE MINI-MALL

It has already been pointed out that a (conservatively estimated) 50 percent increase in retail floor space in the CBD can, with aggressive marketing, be quite easily absorbed by Millbury's potential market. A very effective means of providing pleasant amenities for the pedestrian and driver customer alike is the construction of a small shopping mall in Millbury Center.

A suitable site for such a mall is, at present, fortunately available. The site has an area of about two acres, mostly vacant, and is located near the intersection about 300 feet west of the common, on the north side of Elm Street. (Fig. 22) The site (comprising of lots 80, 81, 82 and 87 of sheet 53 of Millbury assessors' maps) is under single ownership and has access from both Grove and North Main Streets, as well as from Elm Street. The site is within the Business A district.

The site can accommodate a total floorspace of about 16,000 sq. ft., allowing construction of about 20 shops of 750 sq. ft. each (50 ft. x 15 ft.) or about 30 shops of 500 sq. ft. (50 ft. x 10 ft.) each. It can provide on-site parking for about 110 cars which is adequate for both customer and employee parking (one space per 200 sq. ft. of floor area for customer parking and one space per 3 employees on the largest shift.)

The success of the small shopping mall will depend on its attractiveness in terms of design and landscaping, customer amenities, and retail mix.

Sidewalk areas should be widened to permit easy pedestrian flow and incorporation of suitable landscaping and conveniences. An overabundance of gimmicks, such as raised planters, walls, steps, platforms, or changes in levels can clutter the limited space available, however. Professional design assistance is highly recommended.

## 5. CONSOLIDATION OF PARKING SPACES

Parking areas can be most effectively used when they are consolidated and shared by surrounding uses. The peak parking demands of different uses often occur at different times of the day and on different days of the week. Therefore, although a consolidated parking area may provide a smaller number of spaces than the sum total of parking needs of each individual use, it is still capable of meeting the peak demands of all the individual uses. Consolidation, therefore, provides the most efficient use of the parking spaces provided.

In Millbury Center, such parking consolidation is desirable in the following locations (Fig. 22).

- a. A parking area to be shared by the fire station, Roman Catholic church and parochial school, the public library and retail uses facing on Elm Street.
- b. A parking area to be shared by the proposed shopping mall and other neighboring commercial uses.
- c. A parking area off School Street to be shared by the post office, Millbury Savings Bank, Millbury Cooperative Bank and other commercial uses facing on Elm Street and South Main Street.
- d. A parking area, accessible from South Main Street, and located along the north side of the river, to be shared by the commercial and other uses that may develop facing South Main Street and the proposed plaza.
- e. A parking area to be shared by the Millbury Federated Church and the commercial uses located at the northeast corner of the intersection of North Main and Elm Streets.
- f. A parking area at the rear of commercial uses facing North Main Street, between Canal Street and Church Street.
- g. A consolidated parking area at the rear of commercial or mixed residential and commercial uses located on the north side of Elm Street at its eastern end.
- h. A similar parking area or areas at the rear of the proposed residential or mixed commercial/residential uses on the south side of Elm Street.

Most of the recommended locations for consolidated parking areas are on privately owned land and their eventual implementation will depend on the desire for cooperation and adjustment on the part of landowners and businesses



in the interest of commonly shared benefits. It is not suggested that all of these parking areas should be created at once. It is important to remember the overall Concept Plan, however, each time a proposal to redevelop one of these areas comes before the local authorities. With this Plan in mind, each proposal can be guided in such a way as to gradually bring about the recommended land use pattern.

## 6. STREET TREATMENT

### a. Right-of-Way

We recommend a total minimum right-of-way of 56 feet\* (40 feet of pavement width plus 8 feet of sidewalk on either side) for Elm Street from the school at its western end to its junction with Canal Street at its eastern end. For North/South Main Street, we recommend a similar width from its junction with Canal Street to the north to the bridge over the Blackstone River to the south.

### b. Sidewalks

The sidewalk paving material should distinguish the sidewalk from the auto zone. The color and texture of brick make it a desirable material to be used for sidewalks in the town center and will give a design unity to the area. Composed of ready-made components, brick walks are easy to repair and maintain. Pedestrian paving should be extended into unused spaces right up to shop fronts and entrances to encourage good window displays and pedestrian interest.

Sidewalk width should be increased in front of the proposed mini-mall, and other areas of intense commercial shopper activity, wherever possible.

### c. Vistas and Planting

A strong axis or vista can give unity to a downtown area. A vista should generally have strong terminal features, such as imposing buildings, monuments, etc. A vista can be emphasized by linear features such as a line of regularly spaced trees, bushes or green strips or linear parks, and/or long and low buildings and wide sidewalks.

Trees and shrubs are the most basic addition to the streets. Trees planted at regular intervals establish a rhythm which helps in unifying the street. They provide shade for shoppers in warm weather and act as a cooling factor for shoppers in warm weather and act as a cooling factor for shops themselves.

In Millbury Center, Elm Street and North/South Main Street have the potential for providing such vistas, which will intersect at the central focus of the common and the proposed plaza. The regular rhythm and linearity created by uniformly placed trees, street lights, brick-paved sidewalks and other such features would lead people from all four sides to the common and plaza which would become the center of interest and activity for

---

\* see footnote, p. IV-31

the whole downtown area. These features would also give a strong identity to Millbury Center. The war memorial should be moved from its present location to the proposed plaza where it will be far better seen and appreciated by the people.

### G. IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

The implementation program outlines the individual items of work to be completed, makes preliminary estimates of cost of the individual items and of the total project, and assigns responsibility to public and private parties as seems appropriate at this early stage. When an organization is formed to support more detailed development of the plan and of the program for its implementation, these preliminary assignments of costs and responsibilities can be made with greater realism and possible sources of funds can be explored.

Millbury has three alternatives for organizing the implementation of the Millbury Center Development Plan:

1. Establish a non-profit Development Corporation
2. Set up a Community Development Agency with powers of a Redevelopment Authority under Chapter 121-B by special act.
3. Carry out the work first outlined in the Concept Plan on an ad hoc basis, with the Selectmen coordinating existing town departments and the capital improvement program with the initiatives taken by the businessmen and other private associations.

Whichever organizational set-up is chosen, an implementation program planned as a succession of several short phases is best suited to Millbury's situation. It will then be possible to provide visible results in each phase.

Only the broadest priorities can be laid down at this stage, although even these may have to be altered by unforeseen circumstances or political necessity. The following sequence is generally recommended:

- a. The public vacant lot at the intersection of Elm Street and North/South Main Street should be grassed and planted with trees on the perimeter.

In order to compensate for the parking spaces lost thereby and to meet the parking demand of the commercial uses around the intersection, a public parking lot, properly planned and landscaped, should be created on the site proposed for a mini shopping mall. The parking should be so planned that it will serve the mall when it is eventually developed. This new parking lot can be used as an enticement for the development of the proposed mini-mall.

- b. The work of clean-up, repair and painting of buildings facing on Elm Street and North/South Main Street should then be taken up.





This work includes rehabilitation or remodelling of old buildings or storefronts

The Town's contribution to the fix-up program should be the simultaneous widening and repaving of sidewalks. Undergrounding of utilities, particularly at the intersection, should be coordinated with the repaving program.

- c. Improvement of the intersection under the TOPICS plan should be implemented.

The war memorial should, at this time, be transferred to its new location on the plaza site.

- d. Sidewalk widening on the western side of South Main Street should be completed. A well-designed area for sitting, resting and observing the scene should be provided at this location, with good landscaping elements, such as planters, textured paving, and cluster lights.
- e. If, at this stage, parking demand has increased due to increased activity in the business area or new businesses or both, a second public parking lot should be created in the area behind the bank and post office, as indicated on the improvement plan.
- f. When new development or redevelopment activity begins to appear around the intersection, more elaborate landscaping for the plaza should be professionally designed and implemented.
- g. Treeplanting, landscaping, street lighting, and other improvements should be taken up on Elm Street and North/South Main Street.

Consolidation of parking spaces on privately owned land, as shown on the improvement plan, should be encouraged whenever redevelopment is proposed for these areas, or when the opportunities for doing so arise, throughout the implementation process.

The person or persons in charge of the implementation program must have the ability to organize a long-term effort to create enthusiasm in the community as a whole for the town center's improvement, to enlist maximum cooperation by both public and private parties and to coordinate their efforts. Good judgment as to the timing and sequence of the various phases of the total program is the essence of success.

#### H. COST OF IMPLEMENTATION

The cost of implementation of the Millbury Center improvement program can only be estimated very broadly at this stage. The amounts indicated are proposed to be spent over a period of time (say ten years). Expenditures are to be incurred in successive phases. The timing of each phase and its related expenditure is contingent upon the level of private investment in developments in Millbury Center over the years.



The purposes of public investment are to show the community's commitment to the improvement and revitalization of the town center and to induce private development. Therefore, the effect of expenditures in each phase on the private sector should be carefully evaluated in order to determine the appropriate phase and public-private expenditures to follow.

Table 13.

COST OF PUBLIC WORKS IN PHASES

Phase	Description of Work	Materials & Equipment	Labor	Total <sup>3</sup>
A	<u>PLAZA</u>			
	Grade, drain, sod, trees. Brickpaved sidewalks.	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$ 30,000
	<u>PARKING LOT<sup>1</sup></u>			
	Grade, prime, seal, pave, landscape, lighting.	\$26,600	\$ 9,400	\$ 36,000
B	<u>ELM ST.</u>			
	Widen & brickpave sidewalks 400' either side of plaza. Street lighting.	\$21,500	\$23,500	\$ 45,000
C <sup>2</sup>	<u>INTERSECTION</u>			
	Improvement under "TOPICS"			\$ 40,000
D	<u>NORTH/SOUTH MAIN ST.</u>			
	Widen, brickpave sidewalks 300' either side of plaza. Street lighting.	\$18,000	\$20,000	\$ 38,000
E	<u>SECOND PARKING LOT<sup>1</sup></u>			
	Grade, prime, seal, pave, landscape, lighting.	\$22,000	\$ 8,000	\$ 30,000
F	<u>PLAZA</u>			
	Complete plaza work, with lighting, planters, sitting areas. Relocate monument	\$17,000	\$12,000	\$ 29,000
G	<u>ELM ST.; NORTH/SOUTH MAIN ST.</u>			
	Tree planting, landscaping, sitting areas, etc.	\$18,000	\$ 7,000	\$ 25,000
	TOTAL			\$273,000

1. Cost of land not included

2. Hundred percent federal reimbursement

3. Add 25% for general contractors' overhead and profit















ACME  
BOOKBINDING CO., INC.

FEB 28 1991

100 CAMBRIDGE STREET  
CHARLESTOWN, MASS





